

Fact sheet



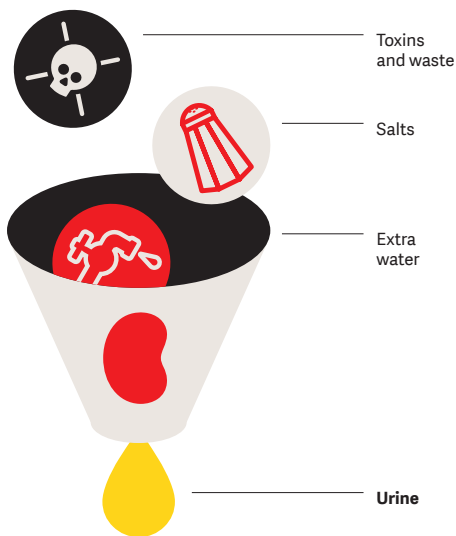
How to look after your kidneys

What do my kidneys do?

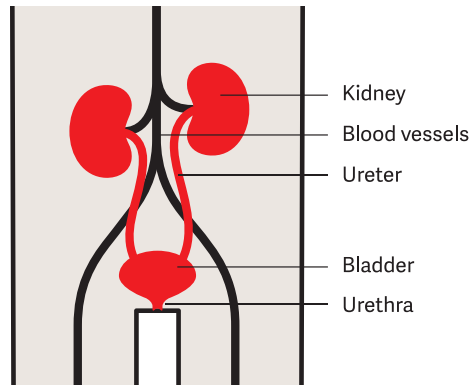
Many of us do not think about our kidneys and the important job they do to keep us healthy. Your kidneys are the unsung heroes of your body. If your kidneys fail, you would die within a few days.

Your kidneys are responsible for many important functions including:

- Removing excess fluid to make urine (wee)
- Controlling your blood pressure
- Filtering waste products from your blood



Most people are born with two kidneys, each one about the size of an adult fist, bean-shaped, and weighing around 150 grams. Your kidneys are located at both sides of your backbone, just under the rib cage, and are protected from injury by a large padding of fat, ribs and muscles.



In each kidney, blood is filtered through millions of mini-filters called nephrons.

The excess fluid and unwanted waste is moved from your kidneys to your bladder, and is then passed out of your body as urine.

Your kidneys also play a role with several important hormones and enzymes. This helps to:

- control blood pressure
- make red blood cells
- maintain strong and healthy bones

All this shows how important your kidneys are to your overall health.

How can I look after my kidneys?



Stop smoking

If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do, quit! This is the most important habit to change to reduce your risk of kidney disease. People who smoke are three times more likely to have reduced kidney function, and have a four to five times greater risk of a heart attack and stroke.

Tips to help you quit:

- Call the Quitline on 13 7848, or contact your local community services directory or health centre for a referral to a stop smoking program
- Surround yourself with people who are non-smokers if you can
- Talking to your doctor has been shown to improve quit rates
- Find healthy activities you enjoy to replace smoking, such as walking, sport, meditation or yoga.



Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight

It is important to maintain a healthy weight. A healthy diet should include a good variety of nutritious foods and you should watch your serving size. A good balance between exercise and food intake is important for good health.

Your body mass index (BMI) is one way to work out your health weight range. A healthy BMI for an adult is between 20 and 25. Having a BMI greater than 25 increases your risk of developing kidney disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. A BMI calculator and more information can be found online at <http://healthyweight.health.gov.au/wps/portal/Home/helping-hand/bmi>

Extreme (fad) diets with very little food or those that exclude some healthy foods are not recommended for maintaining a healthy body weight. More information on fad diets can be found here <http://daa.asn.au/for-the-public/smart-eating-for-you/nutrition-a-z/fad-diets/>

Healthy eating tips include:

- Eat lots of fruit, vegetables, legumes, and wholegrain bread and rice
- Eat some lean meat, such as chicken and fish, at least once a week
- Cut back on snack foods with high levels of saturated fat, sugar or salt. Healthy alternatives include fresh fruit, low-fat yoghurt (check for added sugar) and unsalted nuts
- Limit take-away and fast food meals as an occasional treat
- Add flavour to meals by using things like lemon or lime juice, onion, garlic, chilli, pepper, herbs and spices instead of salt.

Visit your doctor or a dietitian for advice on nutrition and your ideal weight.

The Nutrition Information panel on a food label can help you choose healthier foods:

Always look at the per 100g column as serving sizes will vary

Total Fat	Less than 10g per 100g is best Look for the lowest per 100g
Sugar	Less than 10g sugar per 100g is best If the product contains fruit, allow 20g of sugar per 100g
Salt	Less than 120mg per 100g is best Look for the lowest per 100g

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 3		
Servings size: 150g		
	Quantity per Serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	608 kJ	405 kJ
Protein	4.2 g	2.8 g
Fat, Total	7.4 g	4.9 g
- saturated	4.5 g	3.0 g
Carbohydrate, total	18.6 g	12.4 g
- sugars	18.6 g	12.4 g
Sodium	90 mg	60 mg
Calcium	300 mg (38%)	200 mg

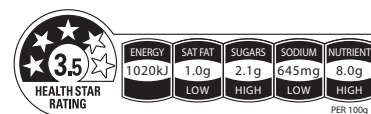
* Percentage of recommended dietary intake

Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk, sugar, strawberries (9%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442)

The ingredients list - if fat, added sugar or added salt are in the first three ingredients, it may not be the best choice.

Health Star Rating

Some packaging also includes the Health Star rating on the front of the packet. The more stars, the healthier the choice when compared to a similar food. It is not useful to compare different food types, for example cheese and cereal.



Remember, some of the healthiest foods may be unlabelled (e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts, lentils, beans, fresh meat and fish).



Enjoy some exercise

The benefits of regular exercise are wide-reaching. Not only can it help to reduce and maintain weight, it can also reduce the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and kidney disease. You only need to exercise for 30 minutes on at least five days of the week to reap the benefits. And you don't have to sweat it out at the gym - a brisk walk is great.

Tips to get more exercise:

- Break up your 30 minutes of exercise into 3 x 10-minute sessions if time is limited
- Get off the bus one or two stops earlier and walk the rest of the way, walk to the shop instead of driving there, and take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- Choose exercise that you enjoy
- Invite a friend to exercise with you or join an exercise group - not only will you lose track of time as you exercise, you'll also help to motivate and encourage each other
- Simple daily activities such as mowing the lawn, or walking around the shopping centre
- If you have small children, find or start a pram-pushers' walking club. Contact your early childhood centre, or local council's community services department to find out if there's a club in your area.



Limit alcohol intake

Excessive alcohol intake can lead to heart disease and high blood pressure, increasing the risk of kidney disease.

Tips to cut down on your alcohol intake:

- Limit alcohol to less than two standard drinks per day. See here for more information <http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/content/standard>
- Ask for ice with your drinks - when the ice melts it will water down the alcohol
- Have a glass of water after each alcoholic drink.

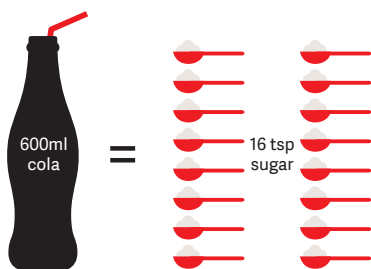


Drink water instead

Drinking enough water each day can help to keep your body, including your kidneys, healthy.

Water is the best drink to satisfy your thirst. It is kilojoule-free, cheap and readily available.

- Add some slices of fruit to your water for variety
- Keep a glass of water handy or carry a bottle of water with you
- There are different theories about how much water is enough, but drinking at least 6 glasses per day, and more if you are exercising is good to aim for.



Soft drinks should be limited as they are high in sugar and can lead to kidney disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Diet soft drinks are lower in sugar, but can be acidic and damage your teeth. Also watch out for **'energy drinks'** which are high in sugar and caffeine.



Enjoy life

Good health and wellbeing means that you are in a good shape physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Tips for an enjoyable life:

- Learn ways to deal with stress - speaking to your doctor is a good start
- Do the things you love
- Spend more time with people you enjoy being with - those who support and encourage you to learn and improve yourself
- Balance the load - take time out to relax during or after a busy day.

Are you at increased risk of developing kidney disease?

Here are some things that increase your risk of developing kidney disease.



Diabetes



Smoke cigarettes



High blood pressure



Over 60 years old



Established heart problems (heart failure or heart attack) and/or have had a stroke



Of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin



Family members with kidney failure



Acute kidney injury earlier in your life



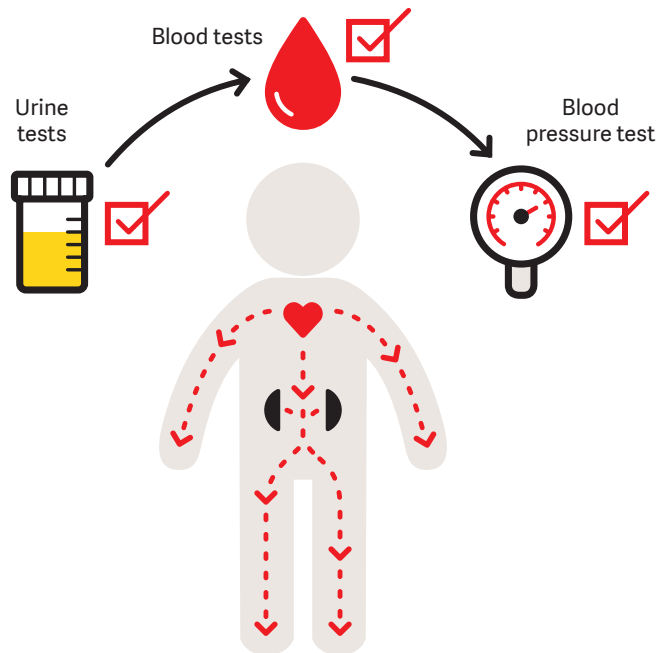
Very overweight or obese (Body Mass Index BMI – over 30 kg/m²)

Kidney Health Check

If you answered YES to one or more of the above, you are at increased risk of developing kidney disease.

Visit your local doctor and ask for a Kidney Health Check.

Your doctor may also talk to you about lifestyle and wellbeing.



THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Your kidneys are vital to your health and you would die within a few days if they failed.
- Look after your kidneys by not smoking and maintaining a healthy body weight.
- Eat well, exercise, limit alcohol, drink water and manage stress.
- Speak to your doctor about a kidney health check.

What does that word mean?

Bladder - A muscular, elastic sac or membrane inside the body that stores the urine.

Blood pressure - The pressure of the blood in the arteries as it is pumped around the body by the heart.

Body Mass Index (BMI) - An approximate measure of your total body fat. It is worked out by dividing your weight in kilograms by your height in metres squared (m²).

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) - A term used widely to describe kidney damage or reduced kidney function (regardless of the cause) that persists for more than three months. Sometimes CKD leads to kidney failure, which requires dialysis or a kidney transplant to keep you alive.

Diabetes - A chronic disease caused by problems with the production and/or action of insulin in the body which helps control blood sugar levels.

Glomerulus - A tiny set of blood vessels in the nephron.

Heart attack - When there is a sudden complete blockage of an artery that supplies blood to an area of your heart.

Insulin - A hormone made by our pancreas. Insulin moves glucose (sugar) from our bloodstream into our body cells which use it to give us energy. Diabetes means the body does not make insulin (Type 1) or does not make enough insulin, or the insulin it does make does not work well (Type 2).

Kidneys - Reddish, bean-shaped body organs. Most people have two kidneys but people can live with one. The kidneys are in the lower back just under the bottom of the rib cage. A kidney is about the size of your fist. The kidneys are very important because they remove waste and excess fluid from the body and produce urine.

They also help to:

- control blood pressure
- produce red blood cells
- keep our bones strong
- maintain the chemical balance of the blood
- change Vitamin D so that the body can use it
- get rid of drugs and poisons

Nephron - The tiny parts of the kidney that filter blood to make urine. There are over one million filters in each kidney.

Stroke - When blood supply to the brain is interrupted. When brain cells do not get enough blood supply, they die. A stroke is a life threatening emergency.

The **FAST** test is an easy way to recognise and remember the most common signs of stroke.

Facial weakness - check their face. Has their mouth drooped?

Arm weakness - can they lift both arms?

Speech difficulty - is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?

Time - is critical. If you see any of these signs, call 000 straight away.

Urine - The name for excess fluid and waste products that are removed from the body by the kidneys. Commonly called wee.

Ureter - The tube that connects your kidneys to your bladder.

Urethra - The tube that takes urine out of your body from your bladder.

For more information about kidney or urinary health, please contact our free call Kidney Health Information Service (KHIS) on 1800 454 363.

Or visit our website kidney.org.au to access free health literature.

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or Health Professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.



If you have a **hearing or speech impairment**, contact the National Relay Service on **1800 555 677** or relayservice.com.au

For all types of services ask for 1800 454 363