

What Can Be Done To Keep My Kidneys Working As Long As Possible?

Your doctor should plan your treatment with you and your family. Some patients may be asked to see a kidney doctor (called a nephrologist). A dietitian may be helpful too. The following things can help your kidneys work better and last longer:

- **Controlling your blood sugar**

The best way to prevent or slow kidney damage is to keep your blood sugar well controlled. This is usually done with diet, exercise, and, if needed, insulin or hypoglycemic pills (to lower your blood sugar level). A test called hemoglobin A1C should be done every three to six months to check your average blood sugar. Ask your doctor what your test result should be. For most people, the result should be less than 7 percent. Daily blood sugar levels should also be checked so that your medication doses can be adjusted.

- **Controlling high blood pressure**

High blood pressure can increase your chances of getting kidney failure. For most people with diabetes and kidney disease, blood pressure should be less than 130/80. You will probably need a medication called an ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitor or an ARB (angiotensin receptor blocker) to control your blood pressure. In many cases, more than one high blood pressure medicine may be needed to reach this target. Studies have shown that the use of these medicines can slow the loss of kidney function in all people with diabetes – even if your blood pressure is normal. They also help reduce heart disease in people with diabetes. In addition, your doctor may prescribe a diuretic (water pill) to help remove salt and water from your blood.

- **Protecting kidney function by taking ACE inhibitors or ARBs**

Your doctor may have you take high-blood pressure medicines (called ACE inhibitors or ARBs) even if your blood pressure is normal. Research suggests that these medicines can slow the loss of kidney function in all people with diabetes – even those with normal blood pressure.

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- **Limiting how much protein you eat**

People with diabetes and kidney disease should eat enough protein for good health, but avoid overeating it. Research suggests that eating less protein can slow kidney damage. You should talk to your doctor about this. If you need to go on a low protein diet, you must plan this with a dietitian who specializes in kidney disease. Do not go on this type of diet without talking to a dietitian so that you have a healthy approach to dietary changes.

- **Promptly reporting to your doctor any difficulty passing urine**

Early treatment for urinary tract infections is important. Some signs of urinary infection could be: frequent need to urinate, burning or pain with urination, cloudy or blood-spotted urine, or a strong odor to your urine.

- Limiting the amount of salt in your diet to help control high blood pressure and reduce body swelling.
- Not using medicines that may damage the kidneys (especially anti-inflammatory pain relieving medicines such as ibuprofen).
- Checking with your doctor before taking any herbal supplements.
- Preventing further damage to larger blood vessels (such as those in the brain and heart) by keeping cholesterol and lipid levels under control.