



# Healthy Living with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

## What do I need to know about chronic kidney disease (CKD)?

When people have chronic kidney disease (CKD), their kidneys don't work normally. Healthy kidneys clean the blood, filter out waste products and help keep several key body functions in balance.

As people get older, their kidney function slowly declines. This loss of function happens faster in people who have CKD.

Often, people with CKD have no symptoms in its early stages. **This means that how you feel usually doesn't tell us how healthy your kidneys are.** But there's a lot you can do to keep yourself healthy, even with CKD.

**When you take steps to take care of your CKD, you may not be able to tell the difference, but your body can.**

## What can I do to take care of my kidneys?

By taking care of your kidneys, you'll also protect your overall health and well-being. You can start with 3 key steps:

- Eat healthier
- Take care of high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Take care of diabetes (blood sugar)

**Making one healthier change at a time is the most effective way to take care of yourself.** Take a look at the chart on the back of this tip sheet. What self-care area is most important for you? What 1 step do you think is most doable for you, at this point in your life? Answering these questions can help you know where to start.

Your CKD care team can support you as you carry out and adjust your self-care plan. Ask them about other Kaiser Permanente resources, such as wellness coaching and classes. All people need support as they learn self-care.

## What else can I do to protect my health?

**Talk with** your friends, family, or another person you trust. Tell them about your self-care needs and goals. Ask whether and how they could support you. This can include things like going to doctor visits with you, setting up medication reminders, or shopping for healthy food. It could also be getting together to do things you both enjoy or just talking by phone once a week.

**If you smoke,** quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health. Ask your care team about treatment and resources.

**Don't take NSAIDs** (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). NSAIDs include aspirin (Bayer, Excedrin), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), ketoprofen (Orudis), and naproxen (Aleve). NSAIDs can make CKD worse.

## How can I make the most of my appointments?

Get ready for each visit by writing down your questions and updates on your health. Share these with your CKD doctor and care team at your visit to help them understand how you're doing. Communicating well with your care team helps them support your self-care and adjust treatment if needed.

### Here are some useful questions:

- What do my recent lab tests tell us about how my kidneys are doing? What does each result mean for my health?
- Should I eat more, or less, of any specific foods?
- What are possible side effects of the medications I'm taking? What can we do to reduce side effects?
- The next time I get sick, should I do anything differently because I have CKD?

It's important to tell your care team specific things about you **even if they don't ask. Remember to tell them:**

- If you've stopped taking a prescribed medication, and why you stopped.
- If you're having trouble remembering when or how to take your prescribed medications. Ask them for tips on keeping track.

And, whenever you see a new nurse, doctor, dentist, or other health care professional, be sure to tell them you have chronic kidney disease.

# Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD): Steps to staying healthier

## Self-care areas:

## I can take these steps:

Take care of  
my high blood  
pressure



Take my medications  
as directed



Eat less (salt) sodium by  
avoiding processed foods



Keep track of my blood  
pressure at home using  
a home monitor

Take care of my  
diabetes



Take my medications  
as directed



Test my blood sugar often and  
track results to spot trends



Get regular physical  
activity

Eat healthier



Eat more fresh foods and  
avoid processed foods



Replace salt with natural  
seasonings such as lemon  
juice or spices



Eat more vegetables (check  
with my care team if I'm  
unsure what's best for me)

## What do I do next?

After looking at the suggested self-care areas (above), pick one area to focus on. Then pick **one step** that's most important to you and that seems the most doable at this point in your life. Write down that step here:

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**Keep in mind:** When you take steps to take care of your CKD, **you** may not be able to tell the difference, but **your body** can.

## Other resources

Visit [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor) to:

- View most lab results and check your preventive health reminders
- Email your doctor
- Use interactive online tools to help keep you and your family healthy

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.