

# **IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DIABETES AND KIDNEY DISEASE**

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Diabetes is the #1 cause of kidney failure in the US. Diabetes is when your blood sugar is too high. High blood sugar causes damage to your kidneys and most of the organs in the body. There is no cure for kidney disease. This is why taking control of diabetes is so important. You can control your diabetes and help slow down the development of kidney disease!

## **FACTS ABOUT YOUR KIDNEYS**

- Your kidneys are shaped like two beans that are about the size of your fist.
- Your kidneys are right below your rib cage near your back.
- Your kidneys act as a filter to clean the blood and make urine.
- Your kidneys get rid of wastes in the body.

## **HOW TO AVOID KIDNEY PROBLEMS**

Keep your blood pressure and blood sugar in control. High blood pressure and high blood sugar can damage the kidneys. Ask the provider who treats your diabetes what blood pressure and blood sugar numbers are good for you. Follow his or her orders on how to keep these numbers within the normal limits set for you.

## **HOW TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE KIDNEY DAMAGE**

Most people with early kidney damage do not see any signs of it. This is because the first sign of kidney damage is finding protein in your urine. You cannot see protein in your urine. The only way to know it's there is to be tested. This test is called a microalbumin test. A microalbumin test will tell your provider if you have kidney damage.

## **SIGNS OF KIDNEY DISEASE THAT YOU MIGHT SEE:**

- fluid build up or swelling in your ankles and legs (also called edema)
- leg cramping
- itching of the skin
- not feeling hungry
- feeling sick at your stomach
- feeling tired
- not getting enough sleep
- having a hard time concentrating

## **WAYS TO TREAT KIDNEY DISEASE**

- Lower your blood pressure. You can do this by:
  - losing weight
  - eating less salt
  - avoiding alcohol and smoking
  - getting regular exercise

- Keep your blood sugar in control. You can do this by:
  - checking your blood sugar every day
  - taking your diabetes medicine as your provider tells you to
  - getting regular exercise
- Take medicine used to lower blood pressure. ACE Inhibitors or ARBS are two medicines that slow down the damage to the kidneys.
- Your provider may ask you to go on a low protein diet. Protein makes the kidneys work harder than they should. Never start a low protein diet without first talking to your provider first.
- Dialysis or a kidney transplant is used when someone loses 85% or more of their kidney function. Your medical team will decide if you need either treatment. Your medical team includes the provider who treats your diabetes and the kidney specialist.

## TESTING FOR KIDNEY DISEASE

Getting your blood and urine checked every year can show how well your kidneys are working.

A **microalbumin test** looks for small amounts of protein in your urine. If protein is found, this means your kidneys are damaged. The only way to know is to have a **microalbumin test**. Remember, protein in the urine may be the first sign of kidney disease.

A **creatinine test** looks at your blood to see if your kidneys are cleaning the waste from your blood. If waste builds up, it can make you sick.

Take this with you to your next diabetes visit. Ask your provider if you need a **microalbumin** or **creatinine** test.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- About 30% of Type I diabetics will develop end stage kidney failure.
- About 10% to 40% of Type II diabetics will develop end stage kidney failure.
- Diabetes is the #1 cause of kidney failure in African Americans.
- African Americans develop kidney failure at an earlier age.
- Anyone with diabetes and high blood pressure, African Americans, Hispanics, and seniors have a higher chance of getting kidney disease.

## REMEMBER:

There is no cure for kidney disease. But, you can take control of your diabetes and blood pressure. Doing this can help you and slow down the development of kidney disease!