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Diabetes and Chronic Kidney Disease

People with diabetes have a greater risk of developing serious problems with their kidneys. In fact, diabetes is one of the leading causes of chronic kidney disease (also called CKD). To better understand why diabetes is a top cause of CKD, it is important to know more about diabetes and how it can damage your kidneys.

Diabetes is a disease that affects a person's sugar levels (also called blood glucose levels). There are two main types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas (an organ in the body behind the stomach) does not make insulin any longer. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the pancreas still makes insulin, but not very much at all, or the body does not use the insulin that it makes very well. Insulin is very important to life. It is needed to move the energy from the food that we eat to the cells in our bodies. If the body does not have enough insulin to move the sugar into the cells, then the sugar (glucose) will stay in the blood and can cause damage to the blood vessels. If this blood vessel damage occurs in the kidneys it is called nephropathy (nef-ra-pa-thee).

Even though a person with diabetes is at a higher risk of developing CKD, this does not mean that every person with diabetes will have CKD. There is hope. You can follow these guidelines to help to keep your diabetes under control and prevent or delay kidney disease.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS. It is very important to keep regular appointments with your health care provider to make sure your diabetes is under control. The A1C test is a simple blood test that your health care provider can do to understand how well your diabetes is being managed. Your health care provider can also tell you what range your blood sugar levels should be throughout the day and after meals. Checking your blood with a finger stick test every day is the only way to know if your diabetes is under control. Your health care provider will also be able to tell you what your blood pressure is. Your health care team can help you manage your diabetes. It is important to know your A1C numbers, finger stick numbers, and blood pressure numbers.

EAT A HEALTHY DIET. One way to manage your glucose levels is to eat a healthy diet. We all have to eat food to give our bodies energy, but we need to make good choices with what we eat every day. It is important to eat fruit, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats. There is no food that is off limits, but it is important to eat more healthy foods each day.

KEEP STRESS LOW. Stress can have added effects on the body if the person has diabetes. Because stress makes glucose levels rise, and it is important to keep glucose levels low, keeping stress levels low is very important. So, the next time stress is high in your life, find ways to help to relieve your stress in a positive way. Take a walk around the block, watch a funny TV show, call a friend, or take a relaxing bath. Take some time out for you to lower your stress, and your glucose levels should also feel a relief.

It is very important to stay informed about your diabetes and ask questions if you are unsure about anything in your treatment plan. Taking good care of your diabetes will help to control your glucose levels and possibly prevent problems like kidney disease.