

High Blood Pressure and Chronic Kidney Disease

Blood pressure is the measure of how much pressure or force your heart needs to use to push your blood through your blood vessels. High blood pressure – a serious medical condition in which the force needed to move the blood is too high, making the heart work extra hard – is one of the top causes of chronic kidney disease (CKD). When blood pressure is too high, it can cause the walls of blood vessels to thicken and become stiff, and can also damage other organs throughout the body.

If a person's kidneys are damaged by diabetes, this can actually lead to high blood pressure. Healthy kidneys make an enzyme called renin, an important part of the body's blood pressure regulating system. If the kidneys are damaged and no longer able to make renin, this can lead to high blood pressure.

Other common health conditions that can accompany CKD can complicate things even more: High cholesterol can lead to plaque, a buildup in the blood vessels that makes them narrower. Salty foods can cause our bodies to retain fluids and increase the amount of fluid the heart needs to pump. The harder the heart has to pump, the higher the pressure, and the more the damage.

Because of this close link between high blood pressure and kidney disease, it is important take simple steps that can help prevent or control high blood pressure and protect your kidneys:

EAT A HEART HEALTHY DIET: Make healthy food choices including eating whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and foods that are low in fat and salt. Learn to read food labels to help you make the healthiest choices. A balanced diet will give your body the energy it needs each day while protecting your heart, blood vessels and organs like the kidneys.

EXERCISE: Talk to your doctor about what types of activities you can safely do to become more active. Even just a short walk after dinner can go a long way to helping you lose extra weight and lower your blood pressure.

TAKE PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS: If your doctor prescribes medication for blood pressure or cholesterol, make sure to take it as ordered. These medicines will not only protect your heart and blood vessels, but will also protect organs like your kidneys.