Healthy Aging Series

Kidney Disease

Colorado Gerontological Society

Kidney disease is a silent killer. More than 26 million Americans suffer from kidney disease according to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF). The two major causes of kidney disease are high blood pressure and diabetes Individuals with a family history of these conditions or kidney disease may also be at risk and should get their kidneys checked. The main function of healthy kidneys is to filter the body's fluids, releasing waste and excess fluid from the body through the urine. The second function of the kidneys is to regulate the body's fluid level, as well as sodium, potassium, phosphorous and calcium. The kidneys also remove drugs and toxins, make red blood cells and keep bones healthy. When kidneys are unable to perform these functions, individuals are diagnosed with chronic kidney disease.

Individuals who have diabetes may experience diabetic kidney disease. It usually takes between five to seven years for these individuals to experience kidney failure.

Individuals with kidney disease may suffer from fatigue and a loss of energy. They may also experience poor appetite, difficulty sleeping, and dry, itchy skin. Other symptoms are muscle cramping at night, swollen feet and ankles, puffiness around the eyes, particularly in the morning and unexpected weight loss or gain. Frequent urination, especially at night may be another indicator of kidney problems.

In end stage renal disease, when the kidneys are functioning at between 10-15 percent and are unable to filter the body wastes, dialysis or transplantation is required.

Risk Factors

- Diabetes, which increases the pressure inside the kidney's filters.
- High blood pressure which weakens the blood vessels resulting in heart disease or stroke.
- Family history of chronic kidney disease.
- Sixty years of age or older.
- Prevalence is greater in African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians or Pacific Islanders.

Preventative Measures

- Control other diseases and conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure and blood sugar that contribute to kidney disease.
- Maintain healthy levels of fats (lipids) such as cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Follow instructions on over-the-counter medications, especially non-prescription pain relievers such as aspirin, ibuprofen
- (Advil and Motrin) and acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- Don't smoke as it leads to atherosclerosis, which reduces blood flow to the kidneys and increases blood pressure.
- Eat a healthy diet by increasing fruit and vegetables and limiting fat, salt, and sugar intake; Individuals may want to follow both a low-protein and a diabetic diet, as well as following a low-salt diet by replacing salt with pepper, lemon or lime juice, paprika and many other seasonings.
- Maintain a healthy weight by measuring Body Mass Index (BMI), which is the recommended weight for an individual's height To calculate your BMI, see page four of this guidebook. If your BMI is between 19 and 24 9, you are in the recommended weight range for your height. A BMI of 30 is considered obese.
- Drink no more than one alcoholic drink a day if you are a woman and two if you are a man.

Screening Tools

The NKF offers free screening for those at risk blood test for creatinine, which is used to calculate the through Kidney Early Evaluation Program (KEEP®), GFR or level of kidney function, and the opportunity which includes a comprehensive health risk appraisal, to discuss health status and review results with onsite blood pressure measurement, urine test for protein, clinicians.

Diagnosis

Early detection of kidney disease can be done through screening.

Based on age, race, gender and other factors, the physician will calculate the glomerular filtration rate (GFR) to determine kidney function. Function ranges from normal at 90 ml/minute to end-stage disease at the 15 ml/minute.

Treatment & Management

• To help you manage chronic kidney disease, track the following information when working with your physician: Hemoglobin A1c (blood sugar), blood in the blood pressure, cholesterol (total, HDL, LDL), Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR), and microablumin (protein in the urine).

• Take medications as prescribed
• Eat a low-protein diet to minimize waste products

Questions For Your Doctor

- What type of kidney disease do I have?
- What is the cause of my kidney damage? What factors may have contributed to this condition?
- What kinds of examinations and diagnostic tests will be performed? Will I need imaging tests, laboratory tests, and/or a kidney biopsy? How should I prepare for these exams and tests?
- How might kidney disease affect my daily life?
- Is it possible to reverse my kidney damage or stop my renal failure from progressing?
- What is the stage of my kidney disease?

TIPS

⇒ Do not be misled by foods that are cholesterol free but contain large amounts of saturated fat that the body will turn into cholesterol.

⇒ The NKF provides cooking tips and cookbooks at its website.

⇒ When nature calls, act promptly. Delaying urination or a bowel movement means the kidneys (or the bowels) will begin reabsorbing the very toxins they are trying to pass out of the body.

⇒ Drink 8-10 glasses of chlorine free water each day to create enough water pressure to push toxins through to the urinary tract for excretion

HELPFUL RESOURCE

National Kidney Foundation – www.kidney.org or call -.800-622-9010