

HOW CAN I LOWER THE RISK OF DIABETIC KIDNEY DISEASE?

The good news is that there are lots of things you can do to lower the risk of diabetic kidney disease. Your health care team can provide advice about:

- **Controlling blood sugar levels**

Hyperglycaemia or high blood sugar is a strong risk factor for kidney damage. It affects the small blood vessels in the kidneys, particularly those in the kidney filters. Controlling blood sugar levels can slow down the development of diabetic kidney disease.

- **Maintaining a healthy blood pressure**

High blood pressure can cause kidney damage and kidney damage can cause higher blood pressure. High blood pressure can also lead to heart attacks, strokes and loss of vision if left untreated. In recent years, the use of an angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) has proven effective treatment for high blood pressure. These drugs lower blood pressure by widening the arteries. They also help to protect kidney function.



- **Controlling albuminuria**

Any treatment that lowers levels of protein in the urine can help to reduce the rate of progression to kidney failure. ACE inhibitors or ARBs may be used to treat albuminuria. These drugs should be used even if blood pressure is in the desired range.

- **Controlling cholesterol levels**

Cholesterol is a type of fat or lipid. There are two types of cholesterol – low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or ‘bad’ cholesterol and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or ‘good’ cholesterol. Triglycerides are a form of stored body fat. Some studies have shown that high cholesterol can increase the progression of diabetic kidney disease. It is important to control your blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels with diet and medication if necessary.

- **Being a non-smoker**

It is well known that smoking harms the body. Smoking causes a narrowing of the arteries, including the small vessels in the kidney filters. This reduces the kidneys’ ability to work properly. If you have diabetes and smoke, the risk of developing albuminuria is much higher. Smoking also increases blood pressure. For reasons that are not well understood, smoking also appears to speed up the progression of diabetic kidney disease to kidney failure.

- **Having a healthy lifestyle**

Take the right steps by:

- staying fit
- maintaining a healthy weight
- doing things that help you to relax and reduce stress

WHAT IS A KIDNEY HEALTH CHECK?

It is very important that diabetic kidney disease is detected early as treatment can help to increase the life of the kidneys. Your health care team can give you practical advice about the best way to keep your kidneys healthy.

If you have diabetes your doctor should undertake a yearly kidney health check, which includes:

- urine test to detect albuminuria
- blood test to estimate the GFR (eGFR)
- blood pressure test