

FACT SHEET

A guide to protecting your kidneys

Your kidneys work hard every day to filter your blood, remove waste, and keep your body in balance. If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD) or just want to keep your kidneys healthy, here are some easy-to-follow tips to help protect them.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Avoid tobacco products



Smoking or using any kind of tobacco hurts your blood vessels, including the ones in your kidneys. This makes it harder

for your kidneys to do their job. If you smoke or vape, talk to your doctor—they have tools and programs to help you quit. You're not alone!

Eat a healthy diet

Good food helps your whole body—including your kidneys!

- ✓ Fresh fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Whole grains like brown rice or oats
- ✓ Lean proteins, especially fish
- ✗ Fried foods
- ✗ Sugary drinks
- ✗ Processed or fast food



If you're not sure what to eat, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian. They can help create a meal plan just for you.

Cut back on salt

Eating too much salt (sodium) makes your body hold on to water, which raises blood pressure and puts extra stress on your kidneys.

Try these tips:

- Don't add extra salt at the table.
- Choose foods labeled "low sodium" or "no salt added."
- Watch out for salty snacks and frozen meals.

Stay active

Exercise helps your heart, blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight—all important for kidney health.

Try to get at least:

- 150 minutes of activity each week (like walking, biking, or dancing)
- Include strength exercises (like lifting light weights or using resistance bands) 2–3 times a week

Even small changes, like taking the stairs or going for a short walk, can make a big difference.



Be careful with pain medications

Over-the-counter pain relievers like ibuprofen (Advil), naproxen (Aleve), and similar drugs are called NSAIDs. These medicines may seem safe, but they can cause serious kidney damage if used too often or in high doses. Always check with your doctor before taking them—especially if you already have kidney problems.



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Always communicate with your doctor

Tell every doctor about your kidney condition

Every time you see a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist—even if it's just for a check-up or cold—let them know if you have kidney disease. Also, tell them about all the medicines you take, including:

- Over-the-counter meds
- Vitamins and supplements
- Herbal remedies

This helps your care team avoid giving you anything that could hurt your kidneys.

Let your family doctor know right away if you:

- Have side effects from a medicine
- Notice new symptoms (like chest pain, trouble breathing, swelling, less urine, or sudden weight gain)
- Can't afford your medication—there may be cheaper options or help available
- Feel overwhelmed or if anything else is affecting your health

Know your numbers

Keep your blood pressure under control



High blood pressure can damage your kidneys over time.

Here's how to stay on top of it:

- Take your medicine exactly as your doctor tells you
- Use a home blood pressure monitor if recommended
- Write down your numbers to share with your doctor

Controlling your blood pressure is one of the best things you can do for your kidneys.

Watch for diabetes



Diabetes is the top cause of kidney disease. If you don't have diabetes,

ask your doctor if you should be tested. If you do have diabetes, protecting your kidneys means:

- Following your food plan
- Taking your medications
- Checking your blood sugar often
- Keeping up with doctor visits



Your doctor can't help with problems they don't know about, so always speak up.