



End Stage Renal Disease, Chronic Kidney Disease & Dialysis Frequently Asked Questions

How Are Kidneys Important in Overall Health?

Kidneys are arguably the most important organs in the human body, functioning to remove wastes and fluid, and controlling delicate chemical balances in the blood. Kidneys also regulate the body's water content; remove drugs and toxins; and release essential hormones.

What is Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)?

CKD is damage to the kidneys which decreases their ability to perform vital functions and keep the body healthy. CKD can cause wastes to build up in blood with life-threatening consequences. People with CKD may develop complications like high blood pressure, anemia (low blood count), weak bones, poor nutritional health and nerve damage.

What is End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)?

The final progression of CKD is referred to as End-Stage Renal Disease or kidney failure, which is a complete loss of kidney function. ESRD can be caused by inherited disorders, prolonged medical conditions (like hypertension and diabetes) or the long-term use of certain medications. ESRD is irreversible and those who suffer from it require a kidney transplant or lifelong dialysis to survive.

Who is Affected by CKD and ESRD?

Anyone can get CKD. People with diabetes, high blood pressure, a family history, or who belong to a population group that has a high rate of diabetes or high blood pressure are most often affected. ESRD is found primarily in patients with a primary diagnosis of diabetes or hypertension. The majority of patients are 40–79 years of age.

Is Kidney Failure Preventable?

Yes. Proper education and management of chronic diseases – like hypertension and diabetes – can often help patients avoid kidney failure altogether.

What is Dialysis?

Kidney dialysis is a means of filtering waste products from the blood when the kidneys fail to do so. Patients most commonly receive dialysis three times per week in sessions that last several hours. Dialysis is not a cure for ESRD, but rather a way to substitute for healthy kidneys.

Are there Different Types of Dialysis?

Hemodialysis is the most common type of dialysis in the United States, in which a patient's blood volume is removed, circulated and filtered through an artificial kidney over the course of several hours. Another method is Peritoneal Dialysis, whereby the patient's own peritoneum (or abdominal lining) is used to filter the blood.

How Does Dialysis Impact the Lives of Patients?

Thanks to improvements in medicine and technology, dialysis patients can continue to live normal and active lives. Individual situations vary, but a majority of patients can work, participate in activities, and spend time with loved ones. Dialysis is certainly a life-altering treatment – requiring multiple weekly sessions – but it allows survival and ongoing quality of life.