

# Kidney Health (Non-Dialysis) Self-Management Plan

Chronic kidney disease is very common. Many people do not have symptoms.

- ☐ Your healthcare provider can check for kidney disease with a blood and urine test annually.
- ☐ Unless advised otherwise by your healthcare provider, get active and try to exercise every day.
- ☐ If you have diabetes, ask your provider to check for protein in your urine (*urine microalbuminuria*).
- ☐ Tell your health care provider about ALL medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medicines and herbal supplements.
- ☐ Keeping your blood glucose levels and blood pressure controlled will help protect your kidneys.
- ☐ Do not stop taking medicines without first checking with your medical or mental health provider.
- ☐ If you smoke, take steps to quit!
- ☐ Eat a healthy, low salt diet.
- ☐ If you do stop medicines, check with your doctor prior to restarting.
- ☐ Avoid alcohol or limit your alcohol intake.

## Green Flags—All Clear



If you have:

- A 3.5–5.5 potassium level in your blood
- Started an exercise program
- Quit smoking
- Blood pressures and blood sugars within the range set by your health care provider
- Made efforts to limit processed and “fast foods”
- No symptoms listed in the yellow or red flags

## What this means ...

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

## Yellow Flags—Caution



If you have:

- A potassium level in your blood over 5.5
- Bloody, dark brown, or cloudy urine
- Foamy urine when you urinate
- Swelling of your hands and feet
- Increased weakness, shortness of breath, or unexplained tiredness
- Increased blood pressure, chest pain, or shortness of breath with exertion
- Nausea, vomiting, or loss of appetite
- Itchy skin
- Lightheadedness with standing

## What this means ...

- Your potassium level is in the caution area. Talk with your healthcare provider or a dietician about which high potassium foods you should avoid.
- You could have a kidney infection.
- You could have new or worsening kidney disease.
- You may need your diuretic (water pill) dose adjusted.

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

## Red Flags—Stop and Think



If you have:

- Severe muscle weakness
- Change in level of consciousness; extreme sleepiness or difficulty awakening

## What this means ...

- Your potassium level could be too high (6.0 or higher)
- Kidney disease is getting worse

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

# Kidney Fast Facts

- Kidneys perform many functions that are critical for your health and wellness:
  1. They balance the minerals and salts in our blood.
  2. They remove waste products and extra fluid from our body.
  3. They are important for balancing our blood pressure.
  4. They help keep our bones strong.
  5. They help our body produce red blood cells.
- Every 30 minutes, your kidneys filter all the blood in your body, removing waste and excess fluid.
- Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a condition where kidneys are damaged and do not work at full capacity to perform the functions listed above. In most cases, the damage involves both kidneys.
- One in three Americans is at high risk for developing kidney disease.
- In the United States, diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney damage, accounting for 3 out of 4 new cases. Other major **risk factors** are having a family history of kidney failure, being overweight, smoking, having heart disease, and being age 60 or older.
- More than 1 in 7 US adults have chronic kidney disease and **90% of them are not aware** they have it. Many people with CKD do not have symptoms.
- The diagnosis is based on a kidney function blood test called *creatinine* and a urine test for protein.
- Creatinine is used to calculate your *glomerular filtration rate* (GFR), which measures how well your kidneys are working to remove waste from your blood.
- Protein in the urine is a sign of kidney disease. Damaged kidneys leak protein into your urine.
- Early detection, lifestyle changes, and treatment can slow or prevent progression of kidney disease.
- Black/African Americans are **more than four times as likely** as White people to develop kidney failure.
- Compared to non-Hispanics, Hispanics or Latinos are almost **33% more likely to be diagnosed with kidney failure**.
- Most people have 2 kidneys, but it is possible to live with only one.
- For people with advanced chronic kidney disease, doctors will discuss kidney replacement treatments like dialysis or kidney transplant, or the option of conservative kidney management (CKM) without dialysis.

## What can you do?

- Ask your health provider to monitor your kidney function yearly with blood and urine tests, especially if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of kidney disease.
- Keep your blood pressure in the range set by your health care provider.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood glucose under control. Let your health care provider know if you are starting to experience low blood sugars.
- Take steps to eat a healthy diet, including one that is low in fats and processed foods.
- Read nutrition labels and aim to limit **sodium** (salt) to under 2,000 mg daily.
- **Remember:** The steps you take to keep your kidneys healthy will help the rest of your body maintain overall health and wellness. Talk to your health care provider to find out the steps that are right for you!

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org).



Aging and Disability Services  
700 Fifth Avenue, 51<sup>st</sup> Floor \* PO Box 34215  
Seattle, WA 98124-4215  
Tel. 206-684-0660 \* TTY: 206-684-0702  
[aginginfo@seattle.gov](mailto:aginginfo@seattle.gov)