

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Key Points

- CKD is very common, but less than 1 in 10 people with CKD ever require dialysis (artificial kidney treatment) or a kidney transplant
- Someone with CKD is at increased risk of heart attack or stroke, especially if they smoke or are overweight
- People with CKD should have regular checks of their kidney function, and have treatment if their blood pressure is 140/85 or more

What is chronic kidney disease (CKD)?

Kidney disease is a term used by doctors to include any abnormality of the kidneys, even if there is only very slight damage. Some people think that 'chronic' means severe. This is not the case, and often CKD is only a very slight abnormality in the kidneys.

How common is CKD?

Recent research suggests that 1 in 10 of the population may have CKD . In those aged over 75 years, CKD is present in 1 out of 2 people. However, many of the elderly people with CKD may not have 'diseased' kidneys, but have normal ageing of their kidneys. Although severe kidney failure will not occur with normal ageing of the kidneys, there is an increased chance of high blood pressure and heart disease or stroke.

How does someone know if they have CKD?

In most cases CKD does not cause any symptoms, and is detected because tests are abnormal.

What causes CKD?

There are many causes of CKD, and two of the commonest causes are high blood pressure and ageing of the kidneys.

What is the treatment for CKD?

There are some things that everyone with CKD should try to do. These are:-

- Lose weight (if overweight), and take regular exercise
- Stop smoking
- Reduce the amount of salt in the diet in order to help control the blood pressure
- Eat a healthy balanced diet
- Have an annual 'flu jab (influenza vaccination), and have the pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccine once (talk to your GP about this)

Leading a normal life with CKD

Most people with CKD should be able to lead normal lives. CKD does not normally run in families and routine family screening is not necessary if one person is affected.