

Diabetic Kidney Disease: Care Instructions



Overview

Finding out that your kidneys have been damaged can be very distressing. It may have taken you by surprise, since damage to kidneys usually does not cause symptoms early on. It is normal to feel upset and afraid.

Having diabetic kidney disease (sometimes called diabetic nephropathy) means that for some time you have had high blood sugar, which damages the kidneys. Healthy kidneys keep protein in your blood, where it belongs. They also help to filter excess waste from your blood. Damaged kidneys do not work the way they should. They let protein pass into your urine and don't filter waste as they should. Sometimes diabetic kidney disease can lead to kidney failure.

Your doctor will tell you how you might be able to slow damage to your kidneys. In many cases, prompt and regular treatment can prevent kidney failure. You will need to take medicine and may need to make a number of changes in your normal routines. If you can keep your blood sugar and blood pressure under control and take certain medicines, you may reduce your chance of kidney failure.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. It is very important that you take your insulin or other diabetes medicine as your doctor tells you. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Try to keep blood sugar in your target range.
 - Eat a variety of healthy foods and follow your meal plan to know how much carbohydrate you need for meals and snacks. Your doctor may restrict your protein. A dietitian can help you plan meals.
 - If your doctor recommends it, get more exercise. Walking is a good choice. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk every day. Try for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
 - Check your blood sugar as often as your doctor recommends.
- Take and record your blood pressure at home if your doctor tells you to. To take your blood pressure at home:

- Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure monitor. Your doctor can make sure that it is accurate and that the cuff fits you. Also ask your doctor to watch you to make sure that you are using it right.
- Do not use tobacco products or use medicine known to raise blood pressure (such as some nasal decongestant sprays) before taking your blood pressure.
- Avoid taking your blood pressure if you have just exercised or are nervous or upset. Rest at least 15 minutes before taking a reading.
- Eat a low-salt diet to help keep your blood pressure in your target range.
- Do not smoke. Smoking raises your risk of many health problems, including diabetic kidney disease. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Do not take ibuprofen, naproxen, or similar medicines, unless your doctor tells you to. These medicines may make kidney problems worse.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse nausea and vomiting.
- You have much less urine than normal, or you have no urine.
- You are feeling confused or cannot think clearly.
- You have new or more blood in your urine.
- You have new swelling.
- You are dizzy or lightheaded, or feel like you may faint.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

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