

What is National Kidney Awareness Month?

During the month of March, the National Kidney Foundation urges everyone to give their kidneys a well-deserved checkup and to be aware of the symptoms associated with unhealthy kidneys. Symptoms include puffy eyes; difficult and painful urination; increased thirst; fatigue; blood in urine; and swelling in the face, hands, abdomen, ankles, and feet.

What your kidneys do

The kidneys are two fist-sized organs in your lower back. They maintain overall health by:

- Regulating the body's salt, potassium, and acid content.
- Removing drugs from the body.
- Balancing the body's fluids.
- Filtering 200 liters of blood a day.
- Releasing hormones that regulate blood pressure.
- Producing an active form of vitamin D that promotes strong, healthy bones.
- Controlling the production of red blood cells.

Kidney disease and complications

One in 3 Americans is at risk for kidney disease. Risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of kidney failure. Kidney disease can cause many other health problems, including:

- Nerve damage
- Cardiovascular disease
- Weak bones
- Heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Kidney failure
- Low red blood cell count (anemia)

Mobile apps

- [CRN Pocket Guide to nutritional Assessment in the Patient with Chronic Kidney Disease](#)
- [My Food Coach App](#)
- [Care After Kidney Transplant App](#)
- [Managing Gout Patient App](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Mark Epstein, MD**, our President.

If you are at risk for kidney disease, the most important steps you can take to keep your kidneys healthy are: 1) Get your blood and urine checked for kidney disease. 2) Manage your diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. In addition, these tips can help you keep your kidneys healthy.

- Keep your cholesterol levels in the target range.
- Take medicines the way your doctor tells you to.
- Cut back on salt. Aim for less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day.
- Choose foods that are heart-healthy: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Be more physically active.
- If you are overweight, lose weight.
- If you smoke, take steps to quit. Cigarette smoking can make kidney damage worse.

Additional resources

- [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#)
- [National Kidney Foundation](#)