Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What caused my kidney disease and my heart disease?
- What is my stage of kidney disease?
- What medications help manage my kidney and heart disease together and their risks and benefits?
- What treatment options help both my heart and my kidneys?
- What changes to my diet or exercise routine should I make that help my heart and my kidneys?
- What signs and symptoms should I look for that would let me know I need to call the doctor? or 911?
- How can I get connected to other patients like me for peer support and information on living with kidney disease and heart disease?

Contact Us

If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

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Discussion Guide for Patients & Caregivers

Living with Chronic Kidney Disease and Cardiovascular Disease

Supported by an education grant from AstraZeneca
Your Kidneys & Your Heart
Because the kidneys and the heart work together, having kidney disease increases your risk of heart disease and having heart disease increases your risk of having kidney disease. It is important to understand these risks and find solutions that reduce your risk and prevent worsening of heart and kidney disease you may already have.

What Is Kidney Disease?
Kidney disease occurs when the kidneys are damaged and they can't filter waste products and extra water out of your blood. This causes the waste products to build up in the body.

Kidney disease can affect your blood pressure, your bones and your red blood cell production. Your red blood cells are very important because they carry oxygen to your body. Kidney disease can also affect the balance of important minerals like phosphorous, sodium and potassium in your blood.

What Causes Kidney Disease?
The two main causes of kidney disease are diabetes and heart disease. High blood pressure may also cause kidney disease.

Signs and Symptoms
Sometimes there are no symptoms of kidney disease. Some symptoms that people may have include:
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep problems
- Dry, itchy skin
- Urinating more or less than usual
- Decreased mental sharpness
- Muscle cramps

Symptoms of both kidney disease and heart disease may include:
- Fatigue and weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Swelling of feet and ankles
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath with activity or with lying down
- Chest pain or discomfort

Kidney Disease Complications
These complications of kidney disease may increase your risk of heart disease and stroke:
- Anemia--not enough red blood cells
- High blood pressure
- High homocysteine levels--too much of this protein in the blood
- Unbalanced calcium and phosphorous in the blood

Treating Your Kidney & Heart
When treating kidney disease, heart disease or both, you want to talk to your doctor about protecting your kidneys and your heart.

Medication: There are medications that prevent health problems associated with kidney disease, including:
- Diabetes medication
- Beta blockers
- ACE inhibitors
- ARBs (Angiotensin Receptor Blockers)
- Diuretics
- Statins
- Medications for anemia
- Potassium binders
- Vitamins and supplements

Dialysis: People in kidney failure or end-stage kidney disease may need dialysis to remove waste and extra fluid from the blood. Two types are:
- Hemodialysis
- Peritoneal dialysis

Tests for Kidney Disease
These tests may be used to see if you have kidney disease and how severe it is.
- Blood tests
- Urine tests
- Ultrasound
- Kidney biopsy