

# AKI - acute kidney injury



Ward contact details:

## My Doctor said I have AKI. What is AKI?

AKI is short for acute kidney injury. Some people used to call it acute renal failure. If you have AKI, it means your kidneys have suddenly stopped working as well as they were. This might have happened in the last few hours, days or weeks.

*Acute Kidney Injury affects both your kidneys*

AKI is usually seen in older people who are unwell enough to be admitted to hospital. If it's not picked up in time, the kidneys can become overwhelmed and shut down. This can lead to irreversible injury and can be life threatening, if not detected early and treated quickly.

*It's essential that AKI is detected early and treated quickly*

## What causes acute kidney injury (AKI)?

AKI is common. It normally happens as a complication of another serious illness. It is not the result of a physical blow to the kidneys.

AKI might be caused by stress on your kidneys due to infection, severe dehydration or some medicines, especially if you take them while you are unwell.

## What should my kidneys do if they work properly?

Your kidneys have lots of very important jobs to do to keep you well.

1. Clean your blood
2. Get rid of waste
3. Keep the right amount of chemicals in your blood, for example potassium
4. Help to keep the right amount of fluid in your body and help make urine
5. Your kidneys also have other jobs such as helping to make red blood cells, keeping acid levels right in your body and help with healthy bones and good blood pressure control

## What are the symptoms of AKI?

Some patients do not have any signs that their kidneys have stopped working. We find out about your kidney injury when we look at your blood test results.

Some patients might have signs that their kidneys have stopped working:

- You might not be passing as much urine when you go to the toilet, even if you drink more fluids.
  - Some people suddenly can't make any urine at all.
- You might have very concentrated urine.
  - Urine can look yellow/ brown/ red in colour.
- Feet and legs might swell up.
  - Especially if you have been standing or sitting for a while.
- If your kidney injury doesn't get better quickly and the waste products build up in your body you might start to feel very sick, tired, drowsy, confused and have itchy skin.

## What happens next?

You will need to have some extra blood tests. This helps us to see if your kidneys are getting better or worse. We will also need to look at a small sample of your urine. We use a test strip to see if you have protein or blood in your urine, even very tiny amounts.

You might also need to have a special scan of your kidneys. This is not painful. It is done with an ultrasound machine. This helps the doctors measure your kidneys. Sometimes the scan will show what is causing your kidney injury.

*Some patients might need to have a bladder catheter to help release the urine*

## What will happen to me after the first tests and investigations?

Usually, you will still be cared for by the medical or surgical doctors on the ward until you are discharged from hospital. Some patients need to see a specialist team of urologists. The urologists will see you if you need an operation to help release the urine from your bladder.

Patients with very rare but serious kidney injury might need to be seen by specialist kidney doctors. They might take over your care and move you to the specialist ward. In some cases, your kidneys might not make a good recovery quickly enough. You might need to have dialysis to clean your blood and help remove waste products.

There are a small number of patients whose kidneys will never recover from acute kidney injury. If this happens the kidney doctors will talk to you about all your options.

## What about my medicines?

Your prescription will be reviewed by the pharmacist and doctor. They might stop some of your medicines altogether or suggest that you stop some for a while until your kidneys recover.

*Unfortunately there are no specific medicines that we can give you that help you recover from acute kidney injury*

There are some medicines we will advise you to stop if you are unwell and become dehydrated. These are called "sick day rules".

We will give you some extra information about these if you are taking these medicines or you can ask your pharmacist.

## What happens once I leave hospital?

We will tell your GP that you have had a kidney injury before you came into hospital or while you have been here. Your GP may want to recheck your blood tests or see you soon after you are discharged.

*Most patient's kidneys will get better quickly and they make a full kidney recovery.*  
*You will need to look after your kidneys forever.*  
*You should tell all health care professionals treating you that you have had an AKI.*

We recommend that you avoid any medicines that can cause damage to your kidneys. Please check with your Doctor, Nurse or Pharmacist before taking any new medicines.

## Can I do anything to help myself?


We suggest that you follow healthy eating and lifestyle advice.


Try and keep your blood pressure under control.


## Where can I get more information?

"Think Kidneys" is the NHS's programme to increase awareness of the prevention, detection and treatment of acute kidney injury.

Here are some useful websites:

 **<https://www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/information-for-the-public/>**

 **<http://www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk/contents.php>**

 **<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/acute-kidney-injury/pages/introduction.aspx>**

 **<http://www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk/>**

## Notes

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Farsi

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