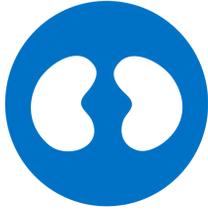


# (Almost) everything you need to know about your kidneys



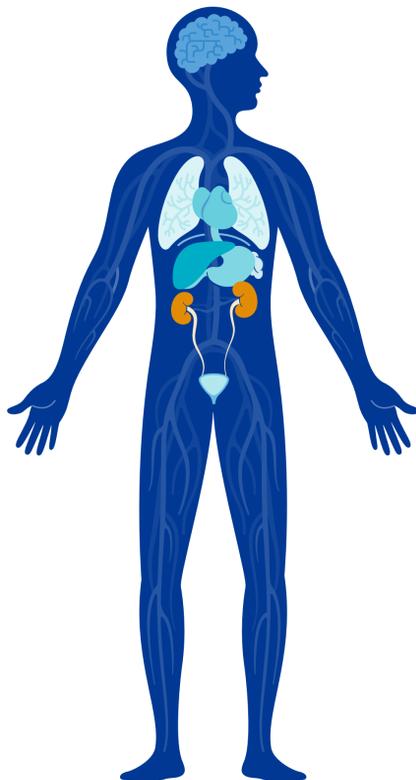
**Most people have two kidneys**  
They are about the size of your clenched fist, they each weigh around 150g and are shaped like kidney beans



**They filter your blood every minute of the day**  
Your blood goes through the kidneys 40 times in 24 hours. There are 140 miles of tubes and a million filters in your kidneys



**They sit in your lower back under the bottom ribs**  
Only 50% of the population know that kidneys produce urine



**They are the hardest working organs in your body**  
They use 25% of the blood from every heartbeat

## What do your kidneys do?

### Make urine



Regulate salt and water in your body, making about 3-4 pints of urine each day



Remove waste products from your blood into your urine



Regulate your blood pressure

### Produce hormones



Create erythropoietin to control the production of red blood cells

### Activate Vitamin D



Keep bones healthy

### Clean your blood



Remove many drugs that some people take for other conditions

## How to keep your kidneys healthy

### Lead a healthy lifestyle



Keep hydrated



Don't smoke



Keep your weight down



Exercise regularly



Eat a healthy diet including fresh fruit, vegetables and fish



Reduce your intake of salt, processed foods and high sugar drinks

If you take regular medication ask your pharmacist how it may affect your kidneys

## What causes kidney problems?

### One of the most common causes of kidney disease is diabetes

But there are many others including genetic and inflammatory conditions, blockages of urine flow and high blood pressure that can be a cause and/or consequence of kidney problems.

### About 1 in 10 people has some form of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

CKD is a long term loss of kidney function which can be harmful. Not all CKD gets worse but it can lead to kidney failure. CKD also increases the risk of heart attack or stroke and increases the risk of acute kidney injury.

### Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) is serious and can occur when a person is unwell

AKI is a quick reduction in kidney function. Finding AKI in the early stages is very important as it can make other health problems more difficult to treat.

### Of emergency admissions to hospital 1 in 5 people have AKI

AKI can occur after major surgery or with heart problems. Up to 100,000 deaths in hospital in the UK each year are associated with AKI. It causes harm and suffering and costs a lot.

## Why you need to think kidneys



If you are worried about your kidneys visit your GP and find out if screening is necessary



Always 'Think Kidneys' when visiting your GP as CKD and AKI often show few symptoms



Your kidneys are remarkable and can look after you at just 10% functionality



AKI often gets better and can even recover fully as the underlying problems are treated

## What are the symptoms of kidney problems?

### In the early stages of kidney disease there are often no symptoms

There may be no pain or reduction in urine output. Kidney problems are found by a simple blood or urine test so we recommend that people at risk of CKD or AKI are tested regularly to spot problems as soon as possible.

### Symptoms of more serious kidney problems can include:

- Tiredness
- Frequent headaches
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep problems
- Itchy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Swelling or numbing of the hands or feet
- Passing urine more (especially at night) or less often than usual
- Darkening / lightening of the skin
- Muscle cramps

Kidney disease is serious. It's harmful and changes lives. Protect your kidneys as if your life depended on it: because it does!

Find out how to keep your kidneys healthy and safe

[www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk](http://www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk)

You can become a donor and help save a life by signing up at: [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)

Your kidneys are amazing. They work so hard for you. Look after them and Think Kidneys

# THINK KIDNEYS

THINK KIDNEYS

NHS



Think Kidneys is a national programme led by NHS England in partnership with UK Renal Registry