What causes kidney problems?

- Diabetes
- Genetic and inflammatory conditions
- Blockages of urine flow
- High blood pressure

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.

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

How to keep your kidneys healthy

- Clean your blood
- Remove many drugs that some people take for other conditions
- 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
- Create erythropoietin to control the production of red blood cells
- Regulate your blood pressure
- Activate Vitamin D
- Keep bones healthy

Why you need to think kidneys

If you are worried about your kidneys, your GP or the hospital team can reassure you if necessary.

Always ‘Think Kidneys’ when visiting your GP or hospital team. Always think if your symptoms could be kidney related.

Your kidneys work hard and can look after you at just 10% functionality.

All often gets better and can be treated fully if the underlying problems are treated.

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

You can become a donor and help save a life by signing up at: www.organdonation.nhs.uk

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

Almost everything you need to know about your kidneys

What do your kidneys do?

- Make urine
- Produce hormones
- Regulate your blood pressure
- Create erythropoietin
- Keep bones healthy
- Activate Vitamin D
- Keep bones healthy

What are the symptoms of kidney problems?

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