



**3 SIGNS OF  
EARLY KIDNEY DISEASE  
— AND —  
7 WAYS TO STOP IT  
FROM PROGRESSING**

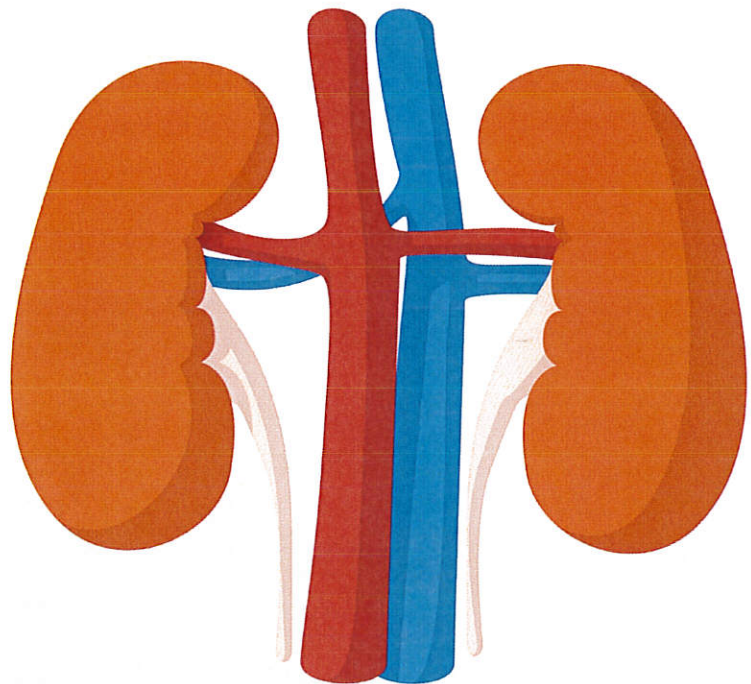
**BY: JED KURZBAN, ESQ.**

## WHAT IS CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)?

*what the body doesn't want or need is excreted in the*  
Chronic kidney disease, or CKD, is a serious condition that involves the gradual loss of kidney function. The kidneys are responsible for filtering your blood to filter and remove waste in the body as well as excess water in order to create urine. Healthy kidneys are capable of filtering about half a cup of blood every minute, but CKD can drastically reduce kidney function.

There are five stages of CKD. Your kidneys can still function well in the early stages, but they will lose nearly all functioning by the time the disease has advanced to the later stages. The last stage of CKD, which is stage 5, is known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD). This stage is also called kidney failure, since it is characterized by the complete loss of kidney function. If you reach this stage, you will need either dialysis or a transplant in order to survive.

*usually*  
There is no cure for CKD, but fortunately, there are steps you can take to slow the progression of CKD if it is diagnosed in the early stages. Because of this, it's important to seek treatment as soon as possible instead of waiting until your CKD has advanced to a later stage.



## 3 SIGNS OF EARLY-STAGE CKD

Early detection is crucial when it comes to CKD. Usually, the sooner you begin treatment, the easier it will be to slow down the progression of CKD. But unfortunately, it's difficult to spot the signs and symptoms of CKD in its early stages.



Obvious signs and symptoms may not appear in the early stages of CKD, which is why this illness often goes undetected until it is in an advanced stage. In fact, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports that less than 10% of patients with stages 1 to 3 CKD are aware of their condition. For this reason, CKD is known as a “silent disease.” However, there are clues:

### 1. Blood and/or Protein in Your Urine

If a urinalysis shows blood and/or protein, this is an early sign of possible CKD.

### 2. Positive ACR Test Results

An albumin-to-creatinine ratio (ACR) test is used to detect protein in your urine, which is a sign that your kidneys are not filtering your blood properly. Ask your doctor to perform this test annually—especially if you are at a high risk of developing kidney disease. If your test results are positive, this could indicate that you have early-stage CKD.

### 3. Abnormal GFR

You should also ask your doctor for a blood test to look for early signs of kidney disease. A blood test will measure the level of creatinine in your blood. Creatinine is a waste product that comes from muscle tissue. Normally, the kidneys remove this product from your blood, so high creatinine levels could indicate kidney damage.



You cannot detect CKD with your creatinine levels alone. Instead, your doctor will use a mathematical formula to calculate your glomerular filtration rate (GFR) based on your creatinine levels, age, gender, and race. Your GFR will go down as you progress through the different stages of CKD.

| CKD Stage | GFR          |
|-----------|--------------|
| Stage 1   | 90 or higher |
| Stage 2   | 60 to 89     |
| Stage 3a  | 45 to 59     |
| Stage 3b  | 30 to 44     |
| Stage 4   | 15 to 29     |
| Stage 5   | Less than 15 |

## WHAT TO DO TO STOP CKD FROM PROGRESSING

If you've been diagnosed with early-stage CKD, there are ways to stop or slow down this disease's progression.

### 1. Monitor Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can cause CKD, but it can also be a complication of CKD. Either way, it's important to monitor and control your blood pressure. Research shows that controlling high blood pressure is the best way to slow the progression of CKD.



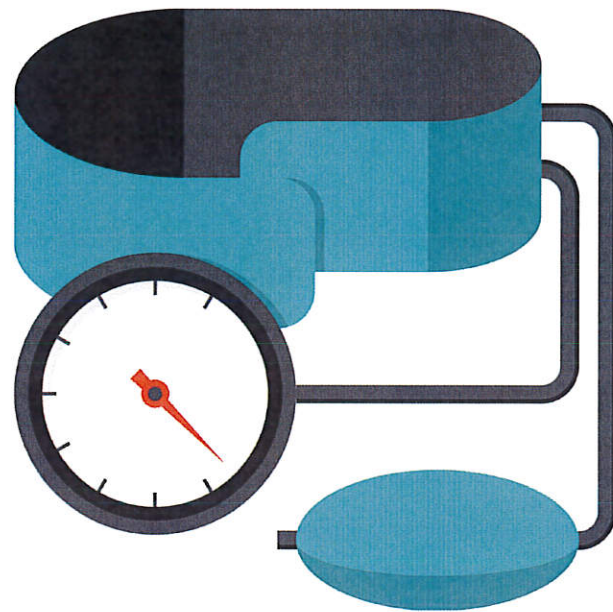
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Purchase a blood pressure machine so you can test your blood pressure at home on a regular basis. To get an accurate reading, follow these tips:

- **Give yourself 5 minutes to rest prior to the test.**
- **Avoid caffeine for at least 30 minutes before the test.**
- **Make sure the cuff is the right size.**
- **Sit with your back against the chair and your arms supported at heart-level.**



Keep track of your blood pressure results by writing down each reading in a notebook. If you have high blood pressure, notify your doctor right away. Your doctor may prescribe medication to help you control your blood pressure. Lifestyle changes, such as exercise, a healthy diet, and stress management, can also lower your blood pressure.

## 2. Reduce Sodium Intake



Your body needs some sodium, but if your kidneys are not functioning properly, too much sodium can cause:

- **Excessive thirst**
- **Fluid retention**
- **High blood pressure**



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To avoid these issues, it's best to reduce your daily sodium intake to no more than 2300 mg per day. Here's how to meet this daily goal:

- **Use fresh herbs or spices to season your food instead of salt.**
- **Check food labels while you grocery shop to ensure you only purchase items that are low in sodium.**
- **Always choose fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats. Canned fruits and vegetables and packaged meats are high in sodium.**
- **Keep in mind that some foods—such as cottage cheese and tomato products—are high in sodium even though they don't taste salty.**
- **Ask for sauce or dressing on the side when dining out. Most sauces and dressings are high in sodium, so you should try to avoid using the entire serving.**

Following these tips can help you keep your sodium intake in check and slow down the progression of CKD.

### 3. Limit Protein Intake

CKD can affect your kidneys' ability to remove the protein waste from your blood, which is why doctors often advise their patients to limit their protein intake.



Studies show that following a low-protein diet can slow the loss of kidney functioning. The amount of protein you should consume on a daily basis will vary depending on your weight, age, and stage of CKD. It's best to ask a doctor or dietitian for advice regarding how much protein to consume every day.



## 4. Reduce Phosphorus Intake

Healthy kidneys can remove excess phosphorus from the blood, but damaged kidneys cannot. As a result, phosphorus levels in your bloodstream may start to rise if you are suffering from CKD. High levels of phosphorus can weaken your bones and cause a buildup of calcium in the lungs and heart, which leads to an increased risk of stroke and heart attack. To prevent these problems, your doctor may suggest reducing your phosphorus intake.

If you have been told to reduce your phosphorus intake, make an effort to avoid these foods:

- Soda
- Milk
- Beer
- Processed meats
- Cheese
- Cream soups
- Cocoa
- Ice cream



Your phosphorus level should fall between 2.5 to 4.5 mg/dL. A phosphorus level within this range will keep your bones healthy, protect your blood vessels, and lower your risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke.

## 5. Stop Smoking

Research shows that smoking cigarettes is closely associated with abnormal urine albumin and the progression of CKD. For this reason, it's important to stop smoking if you have been diagnosed with CKD.

To avoid nicotine withdrawal symptoms, your doctor may recommend step-down nicotine replacement therapy. This therapy is designed to help your body slowly adjust to lower and lower levels of nicotine to minimize cravings. Ask your doctor if this is the best way for you to kick this habit once and for all.



## 6. Stay Active

Staying active is important for your overall health if you have been diagnosed with CKD. Exercise can reduce your risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, and help you control your diabetes.

It's recommended that you engage in at least 20 to 30 minutes of physical activity every day. For the best results, incorporate both cardiovascular and strength training exercises into your daily routine. Some of the best exercises for CKD patients include:

- **Walking**
- **Swimming**
- **Bicycling**
- **Dancing**
- **Weightlifting with light weights and high repetitions**



It's important to listen to your body so you don't overdo it—especially if you are starting a new exercise routine. You may need to start off slow and work your way up to the recommended 30 minutes.

## 7. Avoid Over-the-Counter Medications

Certain over-the-counter medications can harm your kidneys, including medications that contain a combination of caffeine, aspirin, and acetaminophen. Studies have shown that acetaminophen is damaging on its own, but combining these medications can cause more significant damage. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatories can also damage the kidneys. If you have been diagnosed with early-stage CKD, it's best to avoid taking these medications.

It's important to note that every CKD patient is unique, so you should talk to your doctor to determine if these strategies will help you stop your CKD from progressing.





## YOUR RIGHTS AS A CKD PATIENT

As previously mentioned, it is imperative to diagnose CKD in its early stages in order to stop it from progressing. However, many doctors fail to diagnose CKD. Doctors may overlook symptoms of early-stage CKD such as dark-colored urine, dizziness, side or back pain, and fluid retention, *blood and protein in the urine and hypertension.*

Your doctor could misdiagnose your CKD by attributing these symptoms to another health issue or miss these symptoms altogether.

Doctors also fail to diagnose CKD after misinterpreting blood or urine test results. If your doctor does not carefully review your results, he or she may overlook higher-than-normal levels of protein or creatinine that indicate kidney damage.



You need to treat CKD as soon as possible, but a misdiagnosis or failure to diagnose can delay your treatment. By the time you are properly diagnosed, the disease may have advanced past the early stages.



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Failing to diagnose or misdiagnosing a patient's CKD may constitute medical malpractice. Healthcare providers commit medical malpractice when their treatment falls below a "standard of care." Many malpractice claims arise as a result of a failure to diagnose or misdiagnosis, so you may have a case if your CKD was not properly diagnosed.

If this happens to you, it's important to understand your right to file a medical malpractice lawsuit. Seek legal representation from an experienced medical malpractice lawyer as soon as possible to discuss your options. An attorney can protect your rights and hold your doctor accountable for the harm he or she has caused. Your attorney can also help you recover compensation for your medical expenses, lost wages, and pain and suffering.



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