



Protect Your Kidneys!

NOTES FROM THE PARISH NURSE

March is **National Kidney Month**. During this month the NKF (National Kidney foundation) is calling on all Americans to protect their kidneys and prevent damage by educating themselves about CKD (chronic kidney disease) and the proactive ways they can reduce their risk of kidney failure. Millions of people at risk for CKD may be able to prevent the need for dialysis and kidney transplantation with early identification and a dedication to healthy habits.” Your kidneys “quietly support your health” day-to-day by controlling blood pressure, supporting healthy bones, and filtering your blood. Blood pressure is regulated by kidneys controlling fluid levels and making the hormone that causes blood vessels to constrict. Healthy bones require vitamin D, which in its active form is produced by kidneys. And **every day** a person’s kidneys remove two liters of toxins, wastes, and water, by filtering 200 liters of blood.

“More than 26 million Americans have chronic kidney disease, and millions more are at risk but most don’t know it.” CKD is a “silent killer” because it develops slowly with few symptoms. Some clues as to whether you have CKD might be if you have some of the following symptoms: fatigue, loss of energy, poor appetite, difficulty sleeping, dry, itchy skin, muscle cramping at night, swollen feet and ankles, puffiness around the eyes in the morning, more frequent urination, and unexpected weight loss or gain.

Although it is important for people to know risk factors for chronic kidney disease, it is also important to learn what lifestyle changes can reduce the chances of developing CKD or slow its progression. If you have diabetes (the leading cause of kidney failure), high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, or a family history of kidney disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure, you are at greater risk for developing chronic kidney disease. Other risk factors include: over the age of 60, obesity, African-American or Native American heritage, prolonged use of NSAIDS (pain medication such as ibuprofen and naproxen), and chronic urinary tract infections or kidney stones.

To stay healthy, people should maintain a normal blood pressure, keep blood-sugar levels under control (if diabetic), reduce salt intake, exercise regularly, control weight, follow a balanced diet, quit smoking, drink only in moderation, monitor cholesterol levels, and stay hydrated. Know your family medical history and get an annual physical. Kidney-healthy snacks include: unsalted nuts (peanuts, almonds, or walnuts), fruits (both fresh and dried), fiber bars, and vegetables (grape tomatoes, carrots, bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, and cucumbers.)

If you want more information about chronic kidney disease, do check out the website where this information was obtained: www.kidney.org.