

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a term used to describe several diseases and disorders that can affect your kidneys. The majority of these diseases will affect the nephrons (filters) and reduce their ability to remove waste and excess fluids.

CKD is where kidney damage or a decreased level of kidney function lasts for three months or more. It is often classified into five stages which indicate the severity of damage and / or the decrease in kidney function.

Often CKD begins slowly and may progress over a few years and not everyone will go right through from Stage 1 to Stage 5. Stage 5 is also known as End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). It may also be called end-stage renal failure. At Stage 5 you will need dialysis or kidney transplantation is needed.

When your kidneys fail, waste and fluids will build up in your body. Dialysis and kidney transplantation are known as renal replacement therapies (RRT) because they attempt to “replace” the normal functioning of the kidneys.

Common causes of CKD

- Allport syndrome
- [Diabetes](#)
- Childhood nephrotic syndrome
- Glomerulonephritis
- Hemolytic uraemic syndrome
- High blood pressure
- Kidney stones
- Polycystic kidney disease
- Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)
- Wilm's tumour

Early detection and prevention

Early detection and prevention is important and people at risk of developing kidney disease should be evaluated regularly. These people include those with diabetes, high blood pressure or blood vessel diseases, and close relatives of people with hereditary kidney disease.

Sometimes even people with serious kidney disease may not have any symptoms. That is why a blood or urine test may be necessary to check for kidney problems. However, the signs and symptoms listed below may indicate kidney disease and if they are present, a medical assessment to check out the kidneys would be advisable.

Signs and symptoms

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Puffiness of the eyes, hands and feet
- Passage of bloody, cloudy or tea-coloured urine
- Presence of protein in the urine (uremia)
- Excessive foaming of the urine
- Frequent passing of urine during the night
- Passing less urine or difficulty passing urine
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or weight
- Persistent generalized itching