

## Kidney Disease: Controlling Your Blood Pressure



Blood pressure is a measure of the force of blood against the walls of your arteries. If your blood pressure is usually above 140/90, you have high blood pressure, or hypertension.

High blood pressure is one of the major causes of chronic kidney disease. Chronic kidney disease can also cause high blood pressure. No matter which came first—high blood pressure or kidney disease—having high blood pressure gradually damages the tiny blood vessels in the kidneys. If you have high blood pressure, it is very important to lower it.

There are many steps you can take to lower your blood pressure. By controlling your blood pressure, you have the best chance of slowing or stopping damage to your kidneys.

### How high blood pressure causes kidney disease

Blood pressure that is too high damages blood vessels throughout your body. This can cause less blood to get to the kidneys. High blood pressure also damages the tiny filters in your kidneys. Then the kidneys cannot filter your blood properly. Your body will begin to retain fluids, and waste products will build up in your blood. As extra fluid builds up in your blood, your blood pressure can rise even more.

Your kidneys help keep your blood pressure in a normal range. But when they are damaged, they may not be able to do this job. This is why you may have high blood pressure with chronic kidney disease even if you did not have high blood pressure before.

High blood pressure is called a "silent killer." If you have high blood pressure, you may feel fine. But even though your blood pressure is not causing symptoms, it is causing serious damage. This is why it is so important to lower your blood pressure.

### Steps to control your blood pressure

The recommended blood pressure for people with chronic kidney disease is below 130/80. There are many steps you can take to control your blood pressure and slow or stop damage to your kidneys:

- **Take your medicines.** You will probably need more than one medicine to lower your blood pressure. If you stop taking your medicine, your blood pressure will go back up. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

- **Eat wisely.** Follow an eating plan that is good for your kidneys and also lowers the amount of saturated fat in your diet. Most people who have kidney disease need to limit salt (sodium), fluids, and protein. A dietitian can help you make an eating plan.
- **Stay at a healthy weight.** This is especially important if you put on weight around the waist. Losing even 10 pounds can help you lower your blood pressure.
- **Exercise.** Try to do at least 2½ hours of moderate activity a week. It's fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week. Walking is a great exercise that most people can do. Being more active can help you lower high blood pressure as well as maintain a healthy weight and lower high cholesterol. Talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program.
- **Avoid or limit alcohol.** Talk to your doctor about whether you can drink any alcohol.

Here are some other steps you can take to improve your kidney health:

- **Lower your cholesterol.** Keep your cholesterol level lower than 200. If you have high cholesterol, your doctor may prescribe medicine to help lower your cholesterol.
- **Follow your treatment plan.** Keep all your appointments for checkups and tests. If you have any trouble with your medicines, talk to your doctor. Make sure your doctor knows all of the medicines, vitamins, herbal products, and supplements you take.
- **Talk to your doctor before you take over-the-counter medicines.** Some decongestants and pain relievers, such as ibuprofen, can raise your blood pressure or damage your kidneys.
- **Avoid tobacco.** Do not smoke or use other tobacco products. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

## Questions to ask your doctor

Use the space below to list your questions or concerns. Take this sheet with you to your next doctor visit.

**Questions about kidney disease and high blood pressure:**