

Why are our kidneys important?

Kidneys are important because they carry out necessary functions that keep your body regulated. They remove wastes and fluid from your body, regulate water and chemicals in your body, remove drugs and toxins that maybe be introduced in your body and release hormones that help regulate blood pressure, produce red blood cells and promote strong and healthy bones. The kidneys filter and return about 200 quarts of fluid every 24 hours to the bloodstream. ^[1]

What is Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)?

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) permanently damages your kidneys and prevents them from carrying out necessary functions that keep your body regulated. If chronic kidney disease is undetected, it can eventually lead to kidney failure, which can only be treated with a kidney transplant or lifelong dialysis. ^[1]

How Prevalent is CKD?

In the United States, there are 20 million Americans with CKD and an additional 20 million Americans could be at risk for CKD. ^[1]

What causes CKD?

Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of CKD. Diabetes accounts for more than 40 percent of new cases of kidney disease. ^[2] High blood pressure causes more than 1 out of 4 cases of kidney failure. ^[3]



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Chronic Kidney Disease Policy Resource Center

The Chronic Kidney Disease Policy Resource Center provides policymakers with comprehensive educational resources to help bring the growing problem of this disease to the forefront of state legislatures. States can play a significant role in creating awareness of chronic kidney disease and educating their citizens about the benefits of early detection.

Sources:

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- [6] Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality. (2004). 2004 National Healthcare Disparities Report. U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services.
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PREVENTING CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE



WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

What are the Risk Factors for CKD?

Scientific evidence has shown that obesity triples the risk of developing CKD. ^[4] Family history and ethnicity serve as additional risks for developing CKD. African Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans have a greater chance of developing CKD. ^[1]

How is CKD Detected?

CKD can be detected through various measures that include: a test of protein levels in your urine or a blood test for determining levels of creatinine. High levels of creatinine in the blood indicate that the kidneys are not filtering wastes properly. Using the levels of creatinine determined by the blood tests, the glomerular filtration rate (GFR) can be calculated to measure the level of an individual's kidney function. GFR helps determine the stage of kidney disease in an individual.



What is the Most Effective Measure for Preventing CKD?

The most effective preventive measure against the onset of CKD is early detection. Early detection has a huge impact on the quality of life for an individual before they are diagnosed with CKD.

Certain indicators of early onset of CKD include: fatigue, poor appetite, difficulty sleeping, dry/itchy skin, muscle cramping at night, swollen feet and ankles, puffiness around the eye, the need to urinate more often and unexpected weight loss or gain. ^[1]

All individuals need to be informed about the risk-factors and warning signs of this disease, and should ask their doctor for the most appropriate screening and treatment options if necessary.

Are there Disparities in Access to CKD-Related Healthcare for Minorities?

Yes. Health disparities related to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and race still exist in the US healthcare system, especially in regards to chronic care.

CKD disproportionately affects minorities because of their increased susceptibility for developing diabetes and hypertension. ^[5]

Increased prevalence of CKD is caused by a delay in detection and treatment of the early stages of CKD, poor disease management of diabetes and hypertension, and unequal access to healthcare services. For these reasons, minorities have a higher chance of developing kidney failure but are less likely to be treated for it with either dialysis or a kidney transplant. ^[6]

What is the Financial Burden of CKD?

By 2010, the annual cost of treating kidney failure in the United States is expected to increase from \$16.74 billion to \$38.35 billion because the prevalence of kidney failure is more than likely to double from 326,217 to 661,330 cases during this time span. ^[1]

Studies have also found that chronic kidney disease doubles costs for a healthcare system and comorbidities related to CKD further increase the cost of disease management related to CKD than CKD alone. ^[7]

What Can State Policymakers Do To Help Reduce the Burden of CKD?

Early detection and prevention are the best measures for reducing the burden of CKD. State policymakers can address the issue of CKD in their respective states by:

- Creating taskforces to determine the best approach for detection and management of CKD;
- Designating a day/week/month for CKD Awareness;
- Encouraging state health departments to establish data surveillance systems for CKD ^[8];
- Developing a CKD management program under Medicare and Medicaid to improve overall health outcomes and ensure access to adequate care after initial screening;
- Appropriating state funds for university-based CKD screening and management programs for general and at-risk populations;
- Implementing standardized clinical guidelines to ensure that physicians and other medical professionals participate in CKD detection and management for their patients ^[8]; and
- Emphasizing the importance of prevention and early detection through education and awareness.



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