




# Conversation starter: Preventing Chronic Kidney Disease

## Not sure what to say when your time is limited?

If you know you will have limited time talking with someone about chronic kidney disease (CKD) prevention, use this table for general talking points.



Topic	 <b>If you have 5 minutes, say this:</b>	 <b>If you have 10 minutes, add this:</b>	 <b>If you have 15 minutes, also add this:</b>
<b>What is chronic kidney disease?</b>	CKD means you have lasting damage to your kidneys that can get worse over time. If the damage is severe, your kidneys may stop working.	When your kidneys are damaged, they lose their ability to filter waste and fluid out of your blood. Waste can build up in your body and harm your health.	In the U.S., 35.5 million people have CKD. That is more than 1 in 7 adults.

## Topic

### What are the signs and symptoms of CKD?



#### If you have 5 minutes, say this:

Many people with CKD will not have symptoms because it does not usually cause problems until it reaches an advanced stage, or kidney failure.

**Remember:** the only way to know how well your kidneys are working is to get tested for kidney disease.



#### If you have 10 minutes, add this:

Many people with stage 1-3 kidney disease do not have any symptoms. At stage 4 kidney disease, many people start to show symptoms, such as swelling of their hands and feet and pain in their lower back.

People whose kidneys are starting to fail (stage 5) may also have one or more of these symptoms:




- Itchy skin
- Muscle cramps
- Feeling weak and tired
- Feeling sick to their stomach or throwing up
- Feeling less hungry than normal
- Swelling in their hands, legs, feet or ankles
- Urinating (peeing) more or less than normal
- Foamy, frothy or bubbly-looking urine (pee)
- Trouble catching their breath
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Pain in their lower back



#### If you have 15 minutes, also add this:

When people have stage 5 kidney disease, their kidneys are severely damaged and have stopped doing their job to filter waste from their blood. Waste products may build up in their blood and cause other health problems, such as:

- High blood pressure
- Anemia (not enough red blood cells in their body)
- Bone disease
- Heart disease
- Hyperkalemia (high potassium)
- Hyperphosphatemia (high phosphorus)
- Metabolic acidosis (a buildup of acid in their body)

Topic	 <b>If you have 5 minutes, say this:</b>	 <b>If you have 10 minutes, add this:</b>	 <b>If you have 15 minutes, also add this:</b>
<b>Who has a higher chance of developing CKD?</b>	<p>Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two most common causes of CKD. People who have these conditions have a much higher chance of having CKD.</p>	<p>Some people are more likely to get CKD than others. Here are the main groups who have a higher chance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who are over age 60</li> <li>• People with a family history of CKD</li> <li>• People with health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure or heart problems</li> <li>• People of certain races or ethnicities, including African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders</li> </ul>	<p>Our organs work together to keep us healthy. If one organ has problems, it can make other organs sick too. For example, if you have diabetes or high blood pressure, it can cause your kidneys to work harder, which can lead to CKD.</p>



## Topic

### Ways to keep your kidneys healthy or to prevent more damage



#### If you have 5 minutes, say this:

If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, the best way to prevent CKD is to work with your doctor to control your blood sugar and blood pressure.

What you eat matters:

- Eat foods low in salt, potassium and phosphorus
- Use resources such as a dietitian or AKF's [Kidney Kitchen Ask a Dietitian page](#). A registered dietitian is someone with special training in food and nutrition who can help you create and follow a kidney-friendly eating plan.

Stay active:

- Move your body each day for at least 30 minutes. You can do this by walking or doing an activity you enjoy like yoga or yard work.

Take your medicine:

- Always take your medicine as your doctor says

Visit your doctor for regular check-ups:

- This helps catch problems early. If CKD is found at an early stage, medicine and regular tests to monitor it may help stop it from becoming more advanced.



#### If you have 10 minutes, add this:

For your safety:

- Check with your doctor before you exercise to find out what is safe for you
- Learn about your medicines:
  - Know all your medicines and what they are for
  - Talk to your doctor before taking new medicines because some medicines can harm your kidneys

More ways to slow the damage to your kidneys include:

- Quit smoking or using tobacco
- Limit how much alcohol you drink:
  - No more than 1 drink a day for females
  - No more than 2 drinks a day for males



#### If you have 15 minutes, also add this:

Let's use the time we have left to help make an action plan and, based on your needs, set goals for:

- Kidney-friendly eating
- Being active
- Taking your medicine
- Behaviors such as reaching out for support

Make sure each goal is a S.M.A.R.T. goal:

- **Specific:** Make sure your goal is clear and precise. Avoid vague statements.
- **Measurable:** Define how you will measure your progress or success. Use specific measures such as how often or how much (numbers).
- **Attainable:** Ensure that your goal is realistic and achievable. Set yourself up for success.
- **Relevant:** Make sure your goal is meaningful and matches what you want to achieve
- **Time-bound:** Set a specific timeframe for achieving your goal

For example, a goal could be: Next week I will be more active by walking at least 30 minutes a day when I get off work Monday through Friday.