

FAQ

1. Is it true that only elderly people can get kidney failure?

No, any one at any age can get kidney failure. In general, diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure resulting in kidney problems become more common amongst the aging population.

2. Can kidney failure be cured?

Unfortunately, kidney failure cannot be cured. But if you are in the early stages of kidney disease, you may be able to make your kidneys last longer by taking certain steps.

Please refer to Kidney Information: 2.3 To prevent CKD progression.

3. I consume herbal medication for my health, will it affect my kidneys?

In general, the contents of herbal medications are not known. There may be certain risks in consuming herbal medications on a long term basis. For CKD patients, it may be unsafe to consume herbal medications since your body is not able to clear waste products like a healthy person.

4. I have diabetes, will my kidney fail?

Diabetic kidney disease progresses slowly and silently, so you may not feel that anything is wrong until severe problems have developed. Therefore, it is important to get your blood and urine checked for kidney problems at least one a year. Keeping your blood pressure under control is also important.

Please refer to Kidney Information: 8.20 How diabetes can affect the kidneys.

5. Does kidney failure run in the family or is kidney disease hereditary?

About 10 percent of patients with kidney failure are due to hereditary causes. The known leading causes of kidney failure are diabetes and high blood pressure, which often run in families.

The commonest cause of kidney failure that is directly passed down from your parents is Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). PKD is a disease in which cysts (pouches of fluid) form in the kidneys. As time goes by, more cysts appear and get bigger, eventually leading to kidney failure.

6. If I have kidney failure, will my children be prone to kidney problems?

About 10 percent of kidney diseases are due to hereditary problems. Both high blood pressure and diabetes are more common in children whose parents are suffering from the same disease. If your children do not have either high blood pressure or diabetes, they will not be at increased risk.

7. Our body has two kidneys. If you are told to have kidney failure, does it mean both kidneys are affected?

Yes. Usually both kidneys are affected if you have kidney failure.

8. Will high protein diet damage my kidneys?

High protein intake leads to a build-up of nitrogen in the blood. The nitrogen ends up in the kidneys in the form of urea, where it needs to be cleaned from the blood and removed in the urine. This may result in further straining of the impaired kidneys.

9. Both my parents have high blood pressure, am I at risk?

Yes, you are at risk of having high blood pressure.

Please refer to Kidney Information: 9.5 What Can I Do to Control High Blood Pressure?

10. What are the tests for kidney functions?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 5.2. Screening is vital.

11. Does certain food intake lead to kidney disease?

No, but unhealthy eating habits can lead to high blood pressure and diabetes, and these two are the main causes of kidney failure.

12. How long can one live with kidney failure?

One can live as long as others without kidney failure provided that he/she has no other confounding ailments such as severe cardiovascular disease, undergoes dialysis treatment and follow the recommended diet and medications.

13. What is the difference between stones in the kidney and gallbladder?

A kidney stone is a solid piece of material that forms in the kidney from substances in the urine. Gallstones form when liquid stored in the gallbladder hardens into pieces of stone-like material.

14. Can stones in the kidney be removed by medication?

Most small stones can be treated with increased fluid intake, changes in diet and medications. About 90 percent of stones will pass out in the urine by themselves within three to six weeks. Certain types of stones may sometimes be dissolved using medications.

15. Do recurrent kidney stones lead to kidney disease?

Generally speaking, recurrent kidney stones do not lead to kidney failure. But they may cause kidney failure if they cause long-term obstruction of the kidney.

16. Do recurrent urinary tract infections lead to kidney disease?

Many people, particularly women, have recurrent urinary tract infections. These typically do not damage the kidney and are not related to kidney disease, but rather problems with the bladder. However urinary tract infections in males and children warrants further investigations as there may be abnormalities in the urinary tract.

17. Why do kidneys stop working?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 3. Kidney Failure.

18. What happens when our kidneys fail?

- The kidneys are not able to clean toxic waste products from the blood.
- Waste products build up in the blood causing you to feel bad.
- This build up of waste products is called uremia.

19. What are the warning signs of kidney disease?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 4. Sign & Symptoms of Kidney Disease.

20. What can I do to help fight kidney failure?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 5. Prevention of Kidney Disease.

21. Can long term use of analgesics (painkillers) cause kidney failure?

An analgesic is any medicine intended to relieve pain. Over-the-counter analgesics (medicines bought without a prescription) include aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen sodium, and others. These drugs present no danger for most people when taken in the recommended dosage. But some conditions make taking even these common

painkillers dangerous for the kidneys. Also, taking one or a combination of these drugs regularly over a long period of time may increase the risk for kidney problems. Most drugs that can cause kidney damage are the ones that are excreted only through the kidneys.

A different kind of problem can result from taking painkillers every day for several years. Analgesic nephropathy is a chronic kidney disease that gradually leads to end-stage kidney disease and the permanent need for dialysis or a kidney transplant to restore kidney functions.

Patients with conditions that put them at risk for acute kidney failure should check with their doctors before taking any medication. People who take painkillers on a regular basis should check with their doctors to make sure they are not hurting their kidneys. The doctor may be able to recommend a safer alternative.

22. What can be done if my kidneys fail?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 6. Treatment of Kidney Disease.

23. What about kidney transplant?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 6.4 Kidney Transplantation.

24. What is haemodialysis?

Please refer to Kidney Information: 6.3 Dialysis.

25. How often do I need to be on haemodialysis?

Haemodialysis is usually performed for 4 hours three times a week.

26. How much is haemodialysis treatment?

Each treatment for patient who undergoes haemodialysis at NGO or private clinic cost between RM150 to RM250 per session.

27. What is an immunosuppressant?

Immunosuppressant is a term used to describe a number of drugs or medications that suppress or lower the body's ability to reject a transplanted organ or tissue. Another term for these drugs is anti-rejection drugs.

28. How long can one live with one kidney?

As long as one's kidney is healthy, having only one kidney does not affect one's survival at all.

29. Can being overweight cause one's only kidney to fail?

People who are very seriously overweight have an increased frequency of kidney failure. Obese persons have increased risk of high blood pressure (please refer to Hypertension/ High Blood Pressure) and diabetes. These in turn increases the risk of kidney failure.