

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Information

We have reviewed your blood test results and it appears that your kidneys are not performing as well as would be expected.

This is not necessarily a problem as kidney function normally tends to decrease slowly with increasing age. The medical term for your condition, however, is **chronic kidney disease (CKD)**.

Please do not be too alarmed by this diagnosis. This is a very common problem, and many people are being diagnosed with this condition due to the widespread availability of blood tests.

What causes chronic kidney disease?

The most common reason for CKD is ageing kidneys. About one in ten people have some degree of CKD, rising to about half of people aged over 75. In most of these cases, the CKD does not progress beyond the moderate stage unless other problems arise. However, other conditions can cause CKD and potentially lead to more complications, most commonly high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes. Certain medications that are taken long-term can also affect the kidneys.

Why is it important?

Most people with mild to moderate CKD do not have symptoms. It is often an incidental finding on a blood test done for other clinical reasons. However, if CKD progresses further, it can cause people to feel unwell with symptoms such as tiredness, nausea and fluid retention. Some people with more severe CKD may need to be referred to a kidney specialist.

What is the treatment?

CKD is a long-term condition, meaning that there is no 'cure' but it should be monitored. Most patients with CKD just need to have this done annually with their GP surgery. This typically involves having a blood and urine test:

- **Blood test** – this involves checking the kidney function, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Sometimes additional blood tests are needed depending on the severity of CKD.

- **Urine test** – this looks for leakage of protein into the urine due to kidney damage. The amount of protein leakage is a good indicator of the extent of kidney damage.

Treatment of CKD aims to prevent or slow down the progression of CKD and reduce the risk of developing more severe disease. Having CKD is known to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attacks and stroke.

It is therefore important to address all of these by ensuring:

- Your **blood pressure** is well controlled – in most people, this means a blood pressure of less than 140/90 mmHg (or less than 135/85 mmHg) if measured at home. This target may be individually adjusted depending on the stage of CKD and if you have other health problems. Some people benefit from medication to achieve this.
- Your **blood sugar** is controlled, especially if you have diabetes.
- Your **cholesterol** is well controlled - national guidelines recommend all patients with CKD should be offered a cholesterol-lowering medication called atorvastatin to reduce their risk of heart disease

As well as medical support, it is also strongly recommended that people with CKD prioritise a healthy lifestyle, which includes:

- Stopping smoking if you are a smoker
- Reduce your alcohol intake if you regularly exceed 14 units per week
- Eating a healthy balanced diet
- Keeping your weight in check
- Taking regular physical activity