How to look after your kidneys

Information for patients
What do your kidneys do?

- Your kidneys make urine (pee).
- They take away waste from your blood.
- They control the amount of water in your body.

How do we find out that you have a kidney problem?

- We can measure the amount of waste in your blood.
- We can measure the amount of protein in your urine.
What causes kidney problems?

- Damaged blood vessels in your kidneys can stop them working properly.
- This is often caused by diabetes or high blood pressure and can also happen as we get older.

Why does it matter?

Things that help your kidneys can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

You can reduce this risk by looking after yourself.
You can help your kidneys by:

1. Controlling blood pressure

2. Cutting down on salt

3. Exercising
4. Stopping smoking

5. Eating healthy food

6. Controlling your blood sugar (if you have diabetes)
What should I do if I’m unwell?

If you have:

- Drink more water.
- Speak to your pharmacist, practice nurse or GP if this lasts more than 24 hours.
Taking care of my tablets

- Let your GP know if your tablets don’t suit you.

- Before you start taking any new tablets, check with your GP or a pharmacist who knows you.

- People with chronic kidney disease (CKD) should **not take** anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen, naproxen or diclofenac.
What is my kidney number (GFR)?

- The GFR is a measure of how well the kidneys are working.
- The number relates to the percentage of kidney function – the higher the number the better.

Do I know my:

- Kidney number
- Blood pressure
- HbA1c
You can use this page to keep a record of your results and targets

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<th>Blood pressure target</th>
<th>HbA1c target</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Blood pressure</th>
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My goals
You can use this section to write down your goals to improve your kidney health, for example I would like to be more active.

Notes
Further information
You can find more information about how to look after your kidneys on the following websites:

- Think Kidneys
  www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk

- Kidney Patient Guide
  www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk/contents.php

For more information about the kidney services at the Royal Free London, please visit our website at: www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/kidney-services/

Acknowledgement
We would like to thank the East London Community Kidney Service at Barts Health NHS trust for allowing us to use their illustrations and adapt their booklet.

All illustrations are the copyright of East London Community Kidney Service.
If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a full list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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