

## **WHAT IS CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE**

**Well, you have been told you have chronic kidney disease.**

What is chronic kidney disease? What does this diagnosis mean? How is it going to affect my life?

You may be asking yourself these questions right now. If so, we urge you to read this paper to help you gain a better understanding of what chronic kidney disease is and how it will affect your life.

First of all, chronic kidney disease, often referred to as CKD affects about 26 million Americans and as many as 900,000 live in Michigan. Many more have CKD but do not realize it, others are at risk. Do you ever think about the importance of kidney health, or what the kidneys do for your body? Most people don't realize how important the kidneys are to your overall health and well being, or why it's so important to take good care of them.

### **What do the kidneys do?**

The kidneys remove waste, unwanted fluid, drugs and body toxins from your body. They control levels of sodium, calcium and other chemicals in your blood. In addition, they produce hormones in your body that help to make red blood cells, control blood pressure and maintain healthy bones. *Every day your kidneys clean 200 quarts of blood and remove about two quarts of water and waste.*

In chronic kidney disease your kidneys are damaged and they are unable to perform these important functions as they did before. This results in a buildup of unwanted fluid, wastes and toxins in your body and leads to high blood pressure, heart disease, and bone disease, anemia and nerve damage.

### **What causes kidney disease?**

Diabetes is the most common cause of CKD and high blood pressure is second. Other causes include hereditary factors, medications and autoimmune diseases like Lupus.

People with diabetes and high blood pressure should be checked once a year for kidney disease. To help your kidneys it is important to live a healthy life style by eating healthy foods, follow a low sodium diet, exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight. If you have high blood pressure see your doctor for help.

### **What are the symptoms of CKD?**

There are no symptoms in the early stages of kidney disease. You can lose 75% of kidney function before symptoms occur. As the disease worsens you may lose your appetite, feel tired, and have trouble concentrating or sleeping. Some people develop swelling in their feet or legs, puffy eyes or dry itchy skin. Others get muscle cramps or more frequent urination at night. A person with chronic kidney disease can have one or all of these symptoms in advanced stages.

Early diagnosis and treatment is important to slow progression of the disease. There is no cure for chronic kidney disease and it usually worsens over time. Chronic kidney disease can lead to kidney failure and the need for dialysis or kidney transplant.

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR REGULARLY, TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED AND LIVE A HEALTHY LIFE STYLE. READ AND LEARN ABOUT KIDNEY DISEASE, ASK YOUR DOCTOR WHERE YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION.**



Article is based on "Take Care of your kidneys" By the National Kidney Foundation. "Winter 2011" Living Healthy.