

You Have Normal Kidneys!

What do the kidneys do?

The kidneys are two fist-sized organs found in the middle of your back. When they are working well, they clean the blood like a filter: keeping the good things in the body, and getting rid of things the body doesn't need, like waste products, extra salt, and water. The kidney puts these into the urine to get them out of the body. When sick, the kidneys may leak things into the urine that the body needs to keep, such as blood cells and protein.

Your doctor has figured out that your child has normal kidneys. While this is great news, there are some things you should keep in mind to keep the kidneys healthy.

Get a yearly physical

Your child should have a physical with his or her doctor every year. They will check your child's blood pressure every year, and check the urine once every few years. Note to parents or older teenagers: if you're an adult, and/or have a history of high blood pressure or diabetes or family history of kidney disease, blood work should be completed to confirm the function of your kidneys once a year.

Strive to maintain a healthy weight

Obesity puts stress on the kidneys. This stress may lead to damage of the kidney.

Avoid medications that can harm kidneys

Avoid taking anti-inflammatory medicines--especially if dehydrated. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Pamprin) and naproxen (Aleve). You can use acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain without causing any damage to the kidneys.

Be careful with using herbal or over-the-counter medicines. Some of these medications may directly harm your kidneys, or cause other problems when mixed with other medications. Always discuss these products with your doctor and/or pharmacist.

Avoid dehydration

Getting dehydrated can cause damage to the kidneys. Make sure to have your child drink several cups of fluid each day--four to six 8oz cups per day under the age of 10, six to eight 8oz cups over the age of 10. Your child's urine should be light yellow or clear in color.

If your child has vomiting and/or diarrhea, make sure they drink small sips of Pedialyte every 5 minutes to stay hydrated. If they won't drink Pedialyte, try Pedialyte popsicles, available at your local drug store. Other drinks have too much sugar and not enough salt. If they won't drink anything, take them to the doctor to check how dehydrated they are. If they are very dehydrated, they might need IV fluids in the emergency room.

What if I have Diabetes or High Blood Pressure?

Diabetes that is not under good control (not keeping your blood sugar normal, or not taking your medicines) or high blood pressure that is not under control with a medication can damage kidneys and lead to kidney failure. If you develop diabetes or high blood pressure, take your medicines to control it. Kidney failure from these conditions can be prevented.