

## **Spring Clean Your Lifestyle to Keep Your Kidneys Healthy**

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Kidney disease affects over 30 million American adults today. It is the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death, causing more deaths than breast cancer each year. People with this disease may not have symptoms until the damage is severe. Unfortunately, once this happens, all we can do is slow the progression of the disease to prevent more damage. As the disease progresses, many people need dialysis or a kidney transplant.

### **What do your kidneys do?**

The kidneys are two bean-shaped organs that help clean your blood of all waste and harmful materials. This waste combines with water to make urine. Your kidneys produce about 1-2 quarts of urine each day. Kidneys also help control your blood pressure, make red blood cells, and keep your bones strong and healthy.

### **How to know if your kidneys are unhealthy?**

If you notice changes in how often you use the restroom or urine color, higher blood pressure, or you begin to feel weak, these may be signs of kidney disease. These symptoms can be related to other causes, so it is important to talk to your doctor first. If your doctor suspects kidney damage, they may get blood and urine samples. When kidneys are damaged, they leak protein into your urine. Your doctor will look at the amount of protein in your urine to determine the health of your kidneys. Another number your doctor will look at is your glomerular filtration rate (GFR). This number will tell your doctor how well your kidneys are removing waste from your blood (how well they are doing their job).

### **What can you do to keep your kidneys healthy?**

Since (uncontrolled) diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of kidney disease, the most important thing you can do is control your blood sugar and blood pressure. Your doctor may need to prescribe medication, but you can make lifestyle changes to help your kidneys, too. Diet and exercise are the most common changes to make. Avoid foods high in salt or sugar, such as processed foods, and eat more fruits and vegetables. Exercise is very important to keeping your blood pressure and sugars under control, so try to get a little bit of exercise every day. Lastly, to protect your kidneys, stay hydrated! Drinking plenty of water will prevent kidney stones, urinary tract infections, and will help your kidneys do their job.