

# Information

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## Cardiovascular disease and Kidney disease

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September 2004

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### Cardiovascular disease (CVD)

This is the name given to medical problems of the heart, strokes (bleeding or blood clots in the brain) and damage to the vessels, which carry blood around the body.

It happens in two stages. Firstly fatty deposits (plaque) form in the lining of the blood vessel. These fatty deposits burst and a clot (thrombosis) forms. Fatty deposits can narrow the blood vessel and clots can block it, causing no blood to go to the heart, brain and other parts of the body. If there is not enough blood getting through to the brain and heart then a person will quickly have pain and that part of the body will not work, properly. If this happens in the heart, a person can have chest pain (angina) or a heart attack. If this happens in the brain then the person may not be able to use their arms or legs on one side of their body. It can also affect their speech.

People with diabetes are more likely to develop CVD than those without the condition.

Although this can be worrying, there are several things you can do to help avoid CVD:

- **Stop smoking.** This is the most helpful thing you can do if you are a smoker. Your body needs oxygen to live; smoking reduces the amount of oxygen in your body. Your local doctor or practice nurse can help you to stop smoking.
- **Watch what you eat.**
  - Reduce the amount of fat in your diet especially animal fat and ghee. Certain types of fish are good for you such as salmon and mackerel.
  - Do not add salt to food and avoid salty foods such as crisps.
  - Have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Eat wholegrain foods where possible.
  - There are foods which help lower cholesterol (blood fat) and are good as part of a healthy diet such as those containing benecol.
- **Keep active.** This can be walking for 30 minutes a day, swimming, gardening or some similar activity, which makes you feel a little out of breath.

### The charity for people with diabetes

Diabetes UK is the operating name of the **British Diabetic Association**  
Company limited by guarantee Registered office: 10 Parkway, London NW1 7AA  
Registered in England no. 339181 Registered charity no. 215199

- **Watch your weight.** If you are overweight you are more likely to have CVD due to the high fat levels in your blood. Losing ten kilos in weight can improve your blood glucose levels and reduce the risk of CVD.
- **Have your blood pressure checked.** Your doctor or nurse will do this. Losing weight and keeping active help to keep your blood pressure at a normal level and reduce the pressure on your heart.
- **Avoid situations which will increase your stress** as this increases your chance of getting CVD.

## Kidney disease and diabetes

Damage to the kidneys (nephropathy) is more common in people with diabetes. It happens because the small blood vessels (tubes that take blood to the kidneys) become damaged. This means the kidneys do not just take the waste from the body, but also the protein, which is important for the body to work well. Damage to the kidneys is more likely to happen when a person has had diabetes for over 20 years.

### What can be done to prevent kidney damage?

If you keep your blood glucose level between 4-7mmol/l before meals and less than 10mmol/l two hours after a meal, you are less likely to get damage to the blood vessels which can damage to the kidneys.

### How will I know if I have kidney damage?

The nurse will test your urine when you go to the clinic for a check on your diabetes. The urine test is one way to check your kidneys. Sometimes this test shows protein but it is because of infection in your urine and not damage to the kidneys.

You may be asked to save all your urine for 24 hours and send it for a test to show how much protein you are losing through your kidneys.

The doctor can also ask for a blood test, which will show if your kidneys are working well.

The nurse will also take your blood pressure. If this is high it can make it more difficult for your kidneys to work properly.

### Can kidney damage be treated?

Keeping your blood glucose at a good level can help the kidneys work better. The doctor will decide if you need tablets to help your kidneys and to help keep your blood pressure down. Another way of helping your blood pressure is to keep active by walking, gardening or doing an activity you enjoy.

### What happens if the damage gets worse?

If your kidneys cannot work properly then you will have to be careful about the food you eat. This will mean not eating so much protein food or other foods such as bananas - a dietitian will explain this to you. This means your kidneys do not have to work so hard to get rid of waste from your body. Some people will need to have a special (dialysis) machine to do the work of the kidneys. Your doctor will tell you about this.

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