

Kidneys: Hard at Work for You

Every day your kidneys remove excess fluid and waste from your blood. You probably never think about them.

In addition to filtering waste, the kidneys have several important jobs to do. They produce two hormones needed to make red blood cells and regulate blood pressure, and they produce the active form of vitamin D, which helps maintain calcium for bones and other body functions.

In addition to controlling diabetes and blood pressure, you can protect your kidneys with these steps:

- At your regular checkup, ask your doctor about a blood test to measure your kidney function. Early detection of a problem is important.
- If you regularly take over-the-counter painkillers, especially for a long period of time, check with your doctor. The doctor may be able to recommend a safer alternative.
- Get treatment for strep throat. When streptococcus invades the kidneys of adults, it can lead to kidney problems and kidney failure in some cases.
- Know what's in "natural herb supplements." Some substances can work like prescription drugs and cause kidney problems.

For some people, kidney stones may be an issue. Most kidney stones pass out of the body without complications. However, some people may have lasting symptoms or other complications that need to be treated by their doctor.

For more information on kidney stones and how to prevent them, visit the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse at <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/stonesadults/index.htm#prevention>. Or, visit the National Kidney Foundation at www.kidney.org.



Colorectal Cancer: What to Know

According to the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation, colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable, and often curable when detected early. It's important to make screening tests part of your healthy life. **People at higher risk for colorectal cancer include:**

- people with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer
- people with a history of inflammatory bowel disease – ulcerative colitis or Crohn's
- men and women who use tobacco, drink too much alcohol, are overweight, or don't lead an active life
- African Americans.

To lower your risk of colorectal cancer:

- Get regular screening tests beginning at age 50 or sooner if you're higher risk. Talk to your doctor about the best time for you.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Drink alcohol in moderation or not at all.
- Quit using tobacco products or don't ever start.
- Exercise most days of the week.

Source: Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation, www.preventcancer.org/colorectal

Are You Living With Ulcer Pain?

Ulcer pain isn't something to be ignored. In fact, toughing it out won't do your health any favors. Although most ulcers aren't serious, some ulcers can lead to health complications if they're left untreated or aren't adequately treated. Potential complications include gastrointestinal bleeding, digestive tract perforations, and digestive tract obstructions.

But you can reduce your risk of these complications and start feeling a whole lot better by getting your ulcers diagnosed and properly treated. Follow the tips below to help speed the healing process.

Four Ways to Speed Healing

- ◆ **Follow Doctors Orders:** The right treatment plan will help put you on the path to long-term health. Follow your doctor's treatment plan closely. Take your medications exactly as prescribed and report any side effects or problems right away.
- ◆ **Be Mindful of the Menu:** Minimize foods and beverages that can stimulate stomach acid production, such as coffee, alcohol, tomatoes and tomato-based foods, citrus foods and juices, garlic, onion, and spicy foods.
- ◆ **Check Your Medicine Chest:** Steer clear of medications known to irritate the stomach lining, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Examples include aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen.
- ◆ **Become a Student:** Learn all that you can about your condition. Doing so will help arm you with the information you need to make the best decisions about your care. Ask your doctor questions about your diagnosis and prognosis, stay up-to-date on the latest news on ulcer treatment, and read up on self-care tips.

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And just like with any other condition, taking good care of your health in general will help your body heal and recover. So eat right, get plenty of rest, and see your doctor with any new symptoms. With a little TLC, you should enjoy a relatively quick return to good health.

Learn more about ulcers using RealAge Smart Search (<http://www.realage.com/srch/RASearch.aspx>), a health-only search engine that returns expert-reviewed search results.

By Michael F. Roizen, M.D., author of RealAge: Are You as Young as You Can Be? and The RealAge Diet: Make Yourself Young with What You Eat. Roizen, an internist and anesthesiologist, has been listed for the last 13 years in The Best Doctors in America, published by Woodward/White. For more information on RealAge, visit www.RealAge.com.

