



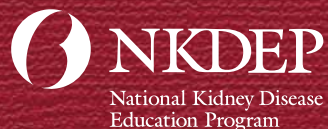
*Reunion*  
Make **Health** a Family <sup>^</sup>Affair

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**A guide to discussing the connection between diabetes, high blood pressure, and kidney disease at your family reunion.**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES







# Make **Health** a Family **Affair!**

Family reunions are fun and give relatives plenty of time to talk about old times, honor ancestors, sample favorite family recipes, and enjoy being together. And while the family is together, it's also a great time to talk about family health.

This guide will help you talk to your family about kidney disease and its connection to **diabetes** and **high blood pressure**. You may know family members who have diabetes or high blood pressure or both. What you may not know is that these conditions are **the two leading causes of kidney failure**, which affects African Americans more than other groups.

That's why it is important to talk to your family about the risk factors for kidney disease, the need to get tested, and the treatments that are available.

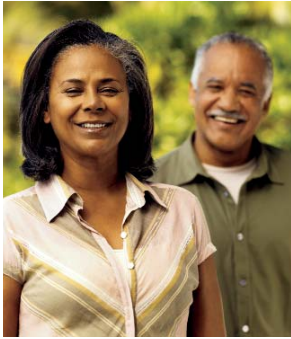
This guide contains the basic information needed to talk to your family about kidney disease and steps they can take to protect their kidneys. You can use the guide yourself or pass it on to the person planning your next family reunion. Either way, you are helping to start (or continue) an important discussion about family health.

This file contains Approach 2 from the Kidney Connection Guide: **Talking One-on-One**. Attached to the approach are fact sheets about kidney disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure that can be copied and used as handouts.

**The approach is only a suggestion. Feel free to present the information in a way that's comfortable for you and interesting for your family.**

Sharing this information can go a long way toward helping ensure that family members enjoy many more reunions to come. Thank you for helping **Make Health a "Family Reunion" Affair!**

## Approach 2: Talking One-on-One



**Tip:** Copy the fact sheets in this guide for your family members. Encourage them to take the information to their doctor.

You can include health information at your reunion by talking one-on-one with family members at risk for kidney disease. You may already know which family members have diabetes or high blood pressure, or you may need to ask others in your family to help you identify them. Start a conversation with these family members, and help them make the connection between their diabetes or high blood pressure and their kidney function.

### Below are some talking points to help you begin the conversation:

- I know that you have [diabetes and/or high blood pressure]. I recently learned that diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of kidney failure. Do you know if you've been tested for kidney disease?
- Don't wait for symptoms. Early kidney disease has no symptoms. Many people don't know they have it until just before the kidneys fail. If your kidneys fail, you'll have to either go on dialysis or get a kidney transplant.
- Blood and urine tests can detect kidney damage. Testing is the only way to know if you have kidney disease. So please talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting tested.
- If you have kidney disease, there are medicines called ACE inhibitors and ARBs you can take and other things you can do to help delay or prevent kidney failure. This is why testing is so important.

### Tips for approaching family members

Sometimes it can be awkward talking to family members one-on-one about personal health issues. Keep these tips in mind when approaching family members at risk:

- Familiarize yourself with the fact sheets in this guide. Offer to help family members find more information. Start with the toll-free numbers and websites listed in the guide.
- Ask permission to have the conversation, and choose the right time and environment. A quiet, private place that is free from distractions is best.
- If a family member is not comfortable talking about their health, don't force a discussion. Express your feelings of concern. Let them know that you'll be ready to talk whenever they are.
- Acknowledge that it's not always easy to face our personal health problems. Be supportive and listen. Emphasize that the final decision to talk to the doctor is theirs.
- Offer to go with them to the doctor.

# Questions and Answers About the Kidneys and Kidney Disease

## Fact Sheet



### What to ask your doctor or health care provider:

Based on my  
medical and family  
history, am I at risk  
for kidney disease?

Do my blood  
and urine tests  
show signs of kidney  
disease?

How often should I  
be tested?

How can I prevent  
or control kidney  
disease?

**Bring these questions  
and a list of your  
medicines with you  
when you visit the  
doctor.**

### What is kidney disease?

Your kidneys (two fist-sized organs located in the lower back) keep you healthy by filtering waste and extra water from your blood, which then leave the body in urine. Kidney disease results from damage, over time, to the tiny structures inside the kidneys that filter the blood. When the kidneys are damaged, they slowly stop doing their job and waste builds up in the blood, harming the body.

If kidney disease is not treated, it can lead to kidney failure. This means the kidneys stop working. **Once the kidneys fail, a person must either begin dialysis or get a kidney transplant.**

### Am I at risk for kidney disease?

You are at risk for kidney disease if you have:

- Diabetes OR
- High blood pressure OR
- A family history of kidney disease (your mother, father, sister, or brother had kidney disease or kidney failure).

If you have any of these risk factors, talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting tested.

Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of kidney failure. Managing these conditions can help reduce the stress on your kidneys. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting tested for kidney disease and steps you can take to protect your kidneys.

### How do I know if I have kidney disease?

Testing is the only way to know if you have kidney disease. Blood and urine tests can detect kidney damage. **Kidney disease often has no symptoms** until just before the kidneys fail. Don't wait for symptoms to talk to your doctor about getting tested.

### What if I have kidney disease?

If tests show you have kidney disease, you can take steps to protect your kidneys from further damage. There are medicines you can take and other things you can do—like controlling your blood sugar and keeping your blood pressure below 130/80—to help delay or prevent kidney failure.

### How can I protect my kidneys?

You can protect your kidneys by: 1) taking steps to prevent high blood pressure and diabetes, 2) managing these conditions if you already have them, and 3) getting tested if you are at risk.

For more information, visit [www.nkdep.nih.gov](http://www.nkdep.nih.gov) or call 1-866-4 KIDNEY (1-866-454-3639).

# Questions and Answers About Diabetes

## Fact Sheet



Here are some common questions and answers about diabetes that you can share with your family members.

**Fact:** Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure.

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes means that the amount of glucose (sugar) in your blood is too high. That's why people sometimes call diabetes "sugar" or "sweet blood." Your blood always has some glucose in it because your body needs glucose for energy. But too much of it in the blood isn't good for your health.

Diabetes can lead to serious health problems and premature death, but people with diabetes can take steps to control the disease and lower the risk of damaging their kidneys, eyes, nerves, and gums and teeth.

### There are two common types of diabetes:

**Type 1 diabetes**, formerly called juvenile diabetes, is usually first diagnosed in children, teenagers, or young adults. People with type 1 diabetes make no insulin and must take insulin every day. (Insulin helps sugar from food get into your cells.)

**Type 2 diabetes**, formerly called adult-onset diabetes, is the most common type of diabetes. With type 2 diabetes, the body does not make or use insulin well. People with type 2 diabetes often need to take pills or insulin. Being overweight and inactive increases the chances of developing type 2 diabetes.

### Am I at risk for diabetes?

You have a higher chance of getting diabetes if you:

- Are age 45 or older
- Are overweight
- Are African American, Hispanic, Asian American or Pacific Islander, or American Indian
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes
- Have high blood pressure (above 140/90)
- Have low HDL (good cholesterol) and high levels of blood fats
- Had diabetes when pregnant, or gave birth to a large baby (over 9 pounds)
- Are physically active less than three times a week

*Continued on the next page.*

### Fact Sheet

#### How do I know if I have diabetes?

You may have one or more of the warning signs below, or you may have no signs at all. Talk to your doctor about getting a blood test to check your glucose levels to know if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes (a condition where blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes).

The signs of diabetes are:

- Being very thirsty
- Urinating often
- Feeling very hungry or tired
- Losing weight without trying
- Having sores that heal slowly
- Having dry, itchy skin
- Losing the feeling in your feet or having tingling in your feet
- Having blurry eyesight

#### What can I do to control or prevent diabetes?

Managing diabetes requires effort every day to eat healthy foods, be physically active, take diabetes medicine as prescribed, and test blood glucose levels. You can take steps to prevent or slow down other health problems diabetes can cause over the years by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol under control. If you have diabetes, work with your health care provider to create a plan for managing your health.

You can do a lot to lower your chances of getting diabetes. Some tips are:

- Be physically active on a regular basis
- Eat less fat and fewer calories
- Lose weight if you need to

Lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels also helps you stay healthy. Talk to your health care provider to make a plan to lessen your risk and improve your health.

#### For More Information

Contact the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383 or [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov).



# Questions and Answers About High Blood Pressure

## Fact Sheet



Here are some common questions and answers about high blood pressure that you can share with your family members.

**Fact:** High blood pressure is the second leading cause of kidney failure.

### What is high blood pressure?

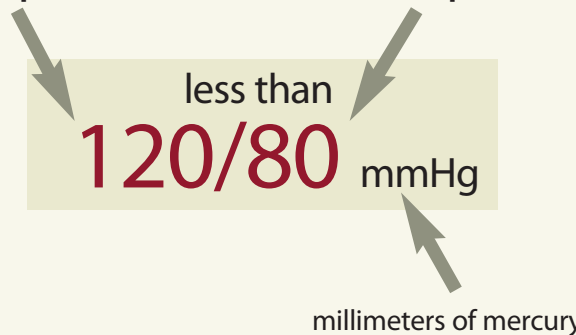
Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of your arteries as it is pumped through your body. When this force stays too high, it becomes a life-threatening condition called hypertension, or high blood pressure. It makes the heart work too hard, causing damage to blood vessels, and can lead to serious health problems like heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg. A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. **If you have diabetes or kidney disease, a blood pressure of 130/80 or higher is considered high.** In general, lower is better. However, very low blood pressure can sometimes be a cause of concern and should be checked out by a doctor.

### Normal Blood Pressure

The pressure of blood in the vessels when the heart beats:  
**systolic pressure**

The pressure between beats when the heart relaxes:  
**diastolic pressure**



High blood pressure

140/90 mmHg or higher

Prehypertension

between 120-139 mmHg and/or 80-89 mmHg

Normal blood pressure

less than 120/80 mmHg

### Am I at risk for high blood pressure?

Anyone can develop high blood pressure. But there are several factors that increase your risk:

- Being overweight or obese
- Not exercising
- Eating too much salt and sodium
- Not eating enough potassium (found in fruits and vegetables)
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Having diabetes

*Continued on the next page.*

## Questions and Answers About High Blood Pressure (continued)

### Fact Sheet



#### **How do I know if I have high blood pressure?**

High blood pressure is often called “the silent killer” because it usually has no symptoms.

Some people may not find out they have it until they have complications that affect their heart, brain, or kidneys.

**The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked regularly by your doctor or health care provider.** Most doctors will check your blood pressure several times on different days to get repeated readings before deciding whether you have high blood pressure.

#### **How can I control or prevent high blood pressure?**

High blood pressure can be treated and controlled. Many different types of medicines lower blood pressure. Two types—called ACE inhibitors and ARBs—also protect kidney function. Better yet, high blood pressure can be prevented.

Simple and often small lifestyle changes can help control and prevent high blood pressure:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be physically active
- Follow a healthy eating plan
- Reduce salt and sodium in your diet
- Drink alcohol only in moderation
- Quit smoking
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes
- Take prescribed medicine as directed

#### **For More Information**

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at 1-800-575-WELL (1-800-575-9355) or [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp), or visit the International Society on Hypertension in Blacks (ISHIB) website at [www.ishib.org](http://www.ishib.org).





# Let us know how it went!

**Mail in this form and we'll send you a free photo album.**

**Reply and receive a free photo album for your favorite reunion photos**  
(Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery)

**Send your completed form to:**

NIDDK NIH, National Kidney Disease Education Program, 31 Center Dr., RM 9A06 MSC 2560, Bethesda, MD 20814-9692

**Be part of our online family photo album.**

Send in a family photo (make sure it's OK with your family members in the picture), and we'll add it to our online family photo gallery. Send the photo with this form, or use the link on the website to email your photo at [www.nkdep.nih.gov/familyreunion](http://www.nkdep.nih.gov/familyreunion).

Please note that your photo will not be returned.

**We would love to hear what you and your family think about the Kidney Connection Guide. We want to make this guide easy and valuable for African-American families, so your comments — positive and negative — will be greatly appreciated. Please answer the following questions.**

**I used the Kidney Connection Guide at my reunion or family gathering on**

\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_  
(date) (city)

**I shared the information with about \_\_\_\_\_ people.**

**I used the following approach(es) (check all that apply):**

- One-on-one talk                       Note to family members  
 15-minute discussion                 I created my own approach

**I found the guide:**

- Easy to use                                 Somewhat easy to use                 Difficult to use

**How would you change the guide? (check all that apply):**

- Provide more information               Provide less information  
 Make it easier to understand           Provide more sample approaches  
 I wouldn't change it

**How interested was your family in the information you provided? (check all that apply):**

- Very interested                             Somewhat interested                 Not at all interested

**Did your family think the information was appropriate for the family reunion?**

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

Any other comments? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Let us know where to send your free photo album. Please print clearly.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your feedback and for taking a great step toward improving your family's health!**