




Reunion
Make **Health** a Family [^]Affair

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

 **NKDEP**
National Kidney Disease
Education Program

Reunion

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 1 from the Kidney Connection Guide: **Note to Family Members**. 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 1: Note to Family Members



Sign and make copies of this note, and attach it to the *Questions & Answers About the Kidneys and Kidney Disease* fact sheet. You can also use this example as a guide for writing your own personal note.

Tip: You can email the note to family members or distribute it in reunion bags.

You are an important part of our family and I care about your health.

I recently learned that diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney failure, and I wanted to share this information with you.

People may know they have diabetes or high blood pressure, but may not know that these conditions put them at risk of developing kidney disease.

Kidney disease is serious—it can cause the kidneys to fail, which means a person must either go on dialysis or get a kidney transplant. But there are things you can do to protect your kidneys.

Please read the attached information. If you are at risk for kidney disease, talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting tested and about other ways to protect your kidneys and stay healthy, so we can all attend many more family reunions.

For more information about kidney disease, call 1-866-4 KIDNEY (1-866-454-3639) or visit www.nkdep.nih.gov.

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 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.



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?

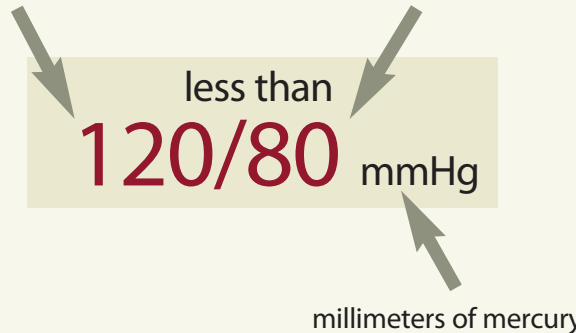
Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of your arteries as it is pumped through your body. When this force stays too high, it becomes a life-threatening condition called hypertension, or high blood pressure. It makes the heart work too hard, causing damage to blood vessels, and can lead 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, or visit the International Society on Hypertension in Blacks (ISHIB) website at 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.

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? _____

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!