

Staying Healthy with Diabetes: Caring for our Kidneys

Our kidneys perform amazing feats of health. Every day, these fist-sized organs filter about 180 liters of blood to preserve important nutrients and rid our bodies of dangerous impurities.

Our kidneys also make life-preserving red blood cells. And they maintain a delicate balance of enzymes and nutrients to control our blood pressure and provide strength to our bones.

Diabetes can damage kidneys. But here is the good news: We can protect and preserve the function of these precious organs with a few simple strategies:

1. **DASH to control your blood pressure.** High blood pressure injures the kidneys. One proven way to reduce blood pressure is with the *Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension* (also known as DASH). DASH is a diet rich in fruits and vegetables plus low-fat dairy foods and small portions of lean meat, poultry, fish, nuts, and legumes.
2. **Shake your salt habit.** Research shows that a diet low in sodium (salt) helps preserve kidney function.
3. **Maintain marvelous blood glucose numbers.** High blood sugars can harm the delicate filters in our kidneys. But when blood glucose levels are kept in a normal range, kidney function can often be preserved.
4. **Mind your medicines.** Some medications prescribed to lower blood pressure can help protect the kidneys as well.
5. **Penny pinch protein.** As valuable as this nutrient is to the body, excess protein forces the kidneys to work harder. Limit meat, fish and poultry to servings about the size of your palm.
6. **Get regular check-ups.** A simple urine test can determine if protein has leaked into your urine---a signal that your kidneys have weakened. Laboratory blood tests can also reveal how well your kidneys are performing their filtering functions.
7. **Get regular exercise.** Physical activity (such as *Dance Out Diabetes*) helps keep blood sugars and blood pressure under control. And this can make our kidneys very happy!