

## What happens in the body if I have chronic kidney disease?

The main job of healthy kidneys is to filter waste products from the body. When this is done, the waste products are sent out of the body in urine (pee). When kidneys lose function they cannot filter wastes out. Water and waste products build up in the body. This causes many problems. When this happens some symptoms include headaches, bad taste in your mouth, loss of appetite, feeling sick to your stomach (nausea) or vomiting.

Kidneys also balance minerals in the body. When the kidneys do not work properly they do not excrete excess minerals such as sodium and potassium in the urine. This also causes problems. For example, too much sodium can lead to your body holding too much water and this leads to swelling, shortness of breath and increased blood pressure. Since each person has kidney disease for different reasons, symptoms you have are not the same as another person.

## As partners in your care, here are some areas we can help you with:

### **Nurse:**

- Making sense of blood tests
- Managing blood pressure
- Understanding symptoms
- Treatment options
- Transplantation

### **Renal Dietitian:**

- Understanding food labels
- Learning about minerals like sodium and potassium
- Meal planning

### **Diabetes Nurse Educator:**

- Blood sugar control and what your blood tests mean
- Managing oral diabetes medications and/or insulin

### **Social Worker:**

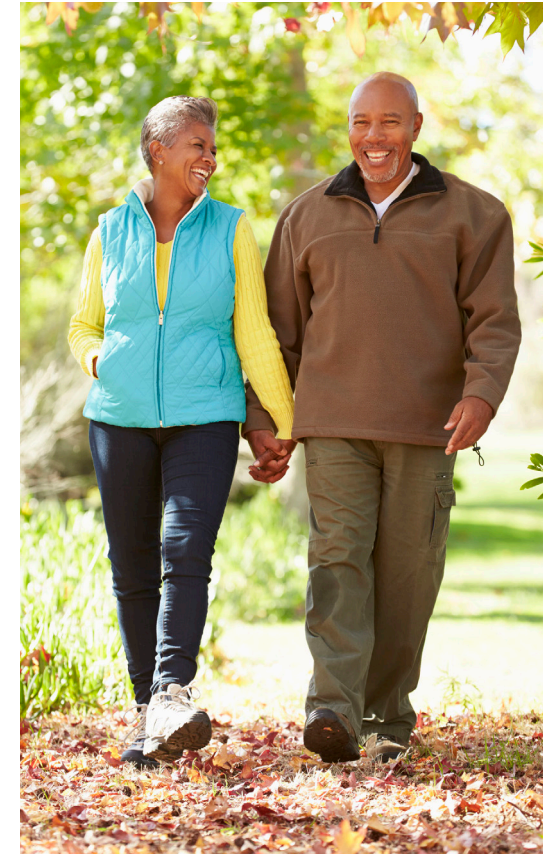
- Advanced care planning
- Financial assistance
- Community resources
- Transportation / Travel

### **Pharmacist:**

- Kidney safe medications
- Safe pain relief medication
- Over-the-counter and herbal medications

# My Life. My Choices.

Complete care when you have chronic kidney disease



St. Joseph's  
Healthcare  Hamilton

Kidney Care Clinic

[www.stjoes.ca](http://www.stjoes.ca)

## What is chronic kidney disease?

Chronic kidney disease occurs when the kidneys do not function the way they should and they slowly stop working. Loss of function occurs slowly over time and is usually permanent. It can take months or years to happen.

## How do I know if there is a problem with my kidneys?

Chronic kidney disease is a silent disease when it first begins. Most people can lose up to 85% of their kidney function before they feel any symptoms. You need to have blood and/or urine tests done regularly to check for kidney problems.

## What other problems can chronic kidney disease cause?

Loss of kidney function can cause other problems such as high blood pressure, anemia or low red blood cell count, acidosis or build up of acids in body fluids, imbalance of cholesterol and fatty acids and bone disease.

## What is the Kidney Care Clinic (KCC)?

The Kidney Care Clinic offers complete care, education and support for people with chronic kidney disease, their families and support persons. We have a special team of health care providers to help you manage your life and make your choices. Our team is made up of special kidney Doctors called Nephrologists, Nurses, Dietitians, Social Workers, Pharmacists and Diabetes Nurse Educators.

## How can the KCC team help with your kidney care?

### Working with our team you can learn ways to:

- Slow the progression of chronic kidney disease
- Promote your personal health
- Manage your symptoms and health issues
- Decide on treatment option choices

## How can we work together with you to promote your safety in the Kidney Care Clinic?

### Together we:

- Review your medications at each visit
- Encourage you to ask questions about your kidney health
- Provide information on kidney disease
- Review our services with you
- Provide a Hepatitis B vaccination program

## What can the KCC team do for you?

We are pleased to be partners in your kidney care. We offer one-to-one counselling as well as group classes. We can also help you get kidney care information in many languages. When needed, we can refer you to other services as well.