

# Kidney Disease

## Overview

Kidney disease occurs when the kidneys are damaged and cannot filter waste and water out of your blood to make urine. This damage causes waste and water to build up in the body. Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is an irreversible form of kidney damage and may worsen to kidney failure. It is the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S!

All Veterans enrolled in VA are eligible for kidney services regardless of service connection status.

Kidney health services include:

- **Screening to prevent kidney failure**
- **Early management of kidney disease**
- **Kidney biopsy to assess for kidney disorders**
- **Management of blood pressure, anemia, bone disorders, and kidney stones**
- **Dialysis (in-center or home)**
- **Kidney transplantation**

Enrolled Veterans may receive services from the VA or, if eligible, from community providers under the VA Community Care Program.

## Kidney Disease in Veterans

- **Disease Burden.** Approximately 500,000 Veteran enrollees are recognized to have CKD. For each of the past 5 years, the number of Veteran enrollees recognized to have CKD has increased nearly 6% per year.
- **High Cost.** Annual VA spending associated with the care of Veteran enrollees recognized with CKD is approximately \$10 billion.
- **Dialysis.** Approximately 22,000 enrolled Veterans receive dialysis either directly from the VA or via purchased care in the community.



## Early Detection is Key!

- **High Risk.** 1 in 3 Americans are at risk for CKD!
- **Low Awareness.** 9 in 10 adults do not know they have CKD because it has no symptoms!

## Ways to Prevent Kidney Disease or Detect It Early

- **Control Risk Factors.** High blood pressure (hypertension) and high blood sugar levels (diabetes) are major causes of CKD.
- **Test for Kidney Disease Regularly.** Ask your doctor about a simple blood test (estimated Glomerular Filtration rate or eGFR) and urine test (urine Albumin-Creatine Ratio) to tell if you have kidney disease.

## VA Kidney Services at a Glance

- **Kidney Education.** VA offers free web-based Veteran education on CKD and treatment via the [VA eKidney Clinic](#), the [VA Mobile Kidney App](#), and the [Veterans Health Library](#).
- **Specialty Care.** VA employs over 200 nephrologists who specialize in the care and management of patients with kidney disease.
- **Dialysis.** Over 150 VA medical centers provide dialysis. VA encourages home dialysis for medically suitable Veterans. VA also pays for Veterans to receive dialysis from over 6,600 VA-contracted community providers.
- **Telehealth.** VA uses [telehealth technologies](#) that allow Veterans to connect to their care team from their home, clinic, or hospital. Ask your healthcare team about receiving care through telehealth.
- **Kidney Transplant.** VA performs over 150 kidney transplants annually. All clinically-eligible Veterans can receive a transplant at a VA Transplant Center. Veterans may also receive a transplant from a community transplant center if they meet [VA's community care eligibility criteria](#).
- **Kidney Research.** VA has a [kidney research](#) portfolio focus on prevention and optimal treatment.

## Virtual Tools/Apps for Veterans with CKD

- VA eKidney Clinic: <http://ckd.vacloud.us/>
- VA Mobile Kidney App: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/mobilekidney>
- VA Text Messaging App (Annie): <https://mobile.va.gov/app/annie-app-veterans>
- VA Video Connect: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>
- VA Virtual Medical Center: <https://vavmc.com/>

## Additional Resources for Veterans with CKD

- VHA National Kidney Program: <http://www.va.gov/health/services/renal/>
- Veterans Health Library (Kidney): <https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/DiseasesConditions/Kidney/>
- VA YouTube (Kidney Health): [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ\\_JVoBEyyjIFejvB2Y7S0tbPlkMH2](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyyjIFejvB2Y7S0tbPlkMH2)
- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for Management of CKD Patient Guide: <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/CD/ckd/VADoDCKDCPGPatientSummaryFinal5082142020.pdf>
- VA Kidney Conditions Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ): <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0960J-1-ARE.pdf>
- Military Exposures: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp>
- VA Community Care Program: [https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/General\\_Care.asp](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/General_Care.asp)
- VA Kidney Disease Research: [https://www.research.va.gov/topics/kidney\\_disease.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/topics/kidney_disease.cfm)

## General CKD Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative: <https://www.cdc.gov/kidneydisease/index.html>
- CDC CKD Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/kidneydisease/publications-resources/2019-national-facts.html>
- National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Patient Resources: <https://www.kidney.org/treatment-support>
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK): <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/kidney-disease>
- American Kidney Fund (AKF): <https://www.kidneyfund.org/>
- American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP): <https://aakp.org/>
- American Association of Kidney Patients Veterans Health Initiative: <https://aakp.org/center-for-patient-engagement-and-advocacy/veterans-health-initiative/>

## Kidney Transplant

- VA Transplant Program: <https://www.va.gov/health/services/transplant/>
- Veterans Transplant Association (VTA): <http://www.govta.org/>

## Emergency Preparedness

- Kidney Community Emergency Response (KCER): <https://www.kcercoalition.com/en/patients/>
- CDC What to Do in An Emergency: <https://www.cdc.gov/kidneydisease/publications-resources/featured-articles/emergency-dialysis.html>

## Questions?

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