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Dependency Tool

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Digital Reception

BRAIN BOOSTER

BY FUSION

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)

fusion
Care Software

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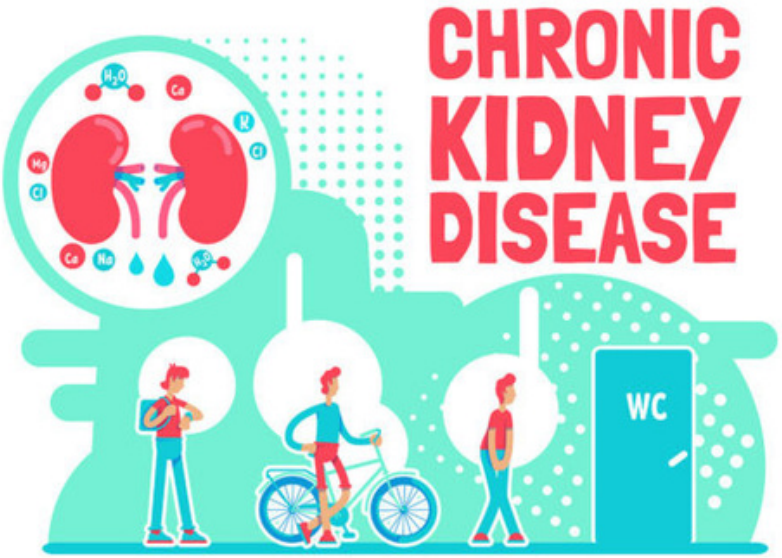
Empowering Outstanding Care Through Technology

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)

Signs, Symptoms and Management



Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a long-term condition where the kidneys gradually lose their ability to work properly over time. The damage usually develops slowly, often over months or years, and many people do not usually notice symptoms in the early stages.

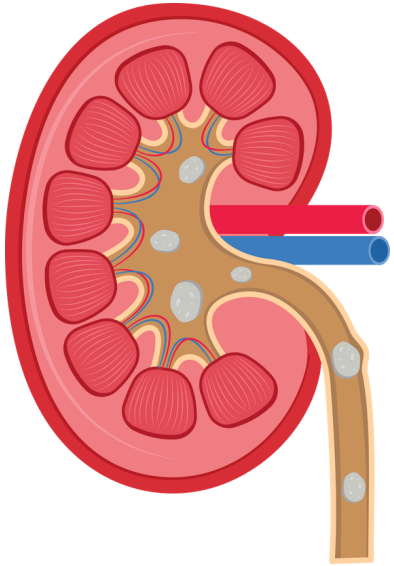
Kidneys are vital organs that act as the body's natural filtration system — removing waste, balancing fluids, controlling blood pressure, and helping keep bones and blood healthy.

World Kidney Day, marked on 12 March 2026, is a global health awareness campaign focused on improving understanding of kidney health and encouraging early detection of kidney disease.

The 2026 theme — **"Kidney Health for All: Caring for People, Protecting the Planet"** — highlights the importance of accessible, preventative care across all settings, including care homes.

Key facts:

- Around 1 in 10 people worldwide live with kidney disease.
- In the UK, kidney disease affects over 7 million people.
- CKD often develops silently, with symptoms appearing only in later stages.



Because early kidney disease is usually symptom-free, care environments play a crucial role in spotting risks early.

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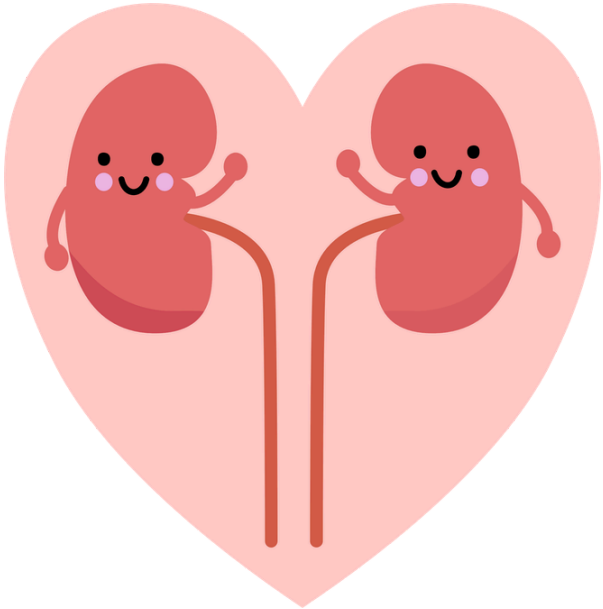
What Do the Kidneys Normally Do?

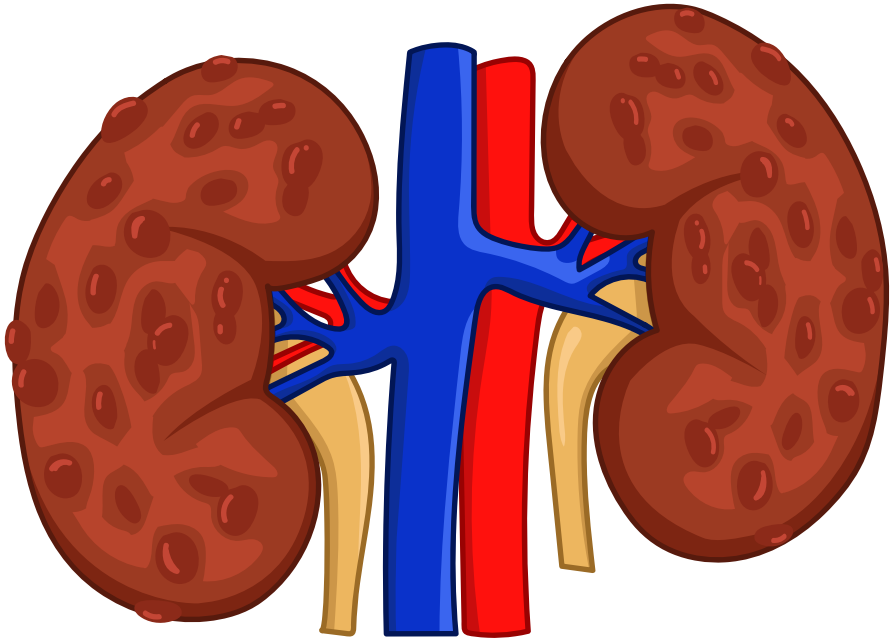
Healthy Kidneys:

- Filter waste products from the blood
- Remove excess water through urine
- Balance salts and minerals
- Help control blood pressure
- Produce hormones that support red blood cells and bone health



When kidney function declines, waste and fluid can build up in the body.

What Happens in Chronic Kidney Disease?



In CKD:

- Kidney damage is permanent but often manageable
- Kidney function reduces gradually
- The condition may worsen if not monitored or treated

CKD is measured in stages (1–5) based on how well the kidneys filter blood (this is called eGFR).

STAGE 1
Normal function with signs of damage

STAGE 2
Mild Reduction

STAGE 3
Moderate Reduction

STAGE 4
Severe Reduction

STAGE 5
Kidney Failure
(may need dialysis or supportive care)

Many people live for years with early-stage CKD with proper care.

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Who Is Most at Risk?

CKD is common in older adults and frequently seen in UK care home residents.

Higher risk groups include people with:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Age over 60
- Family history of kidney disease
- Long-term use of certain medications
- Dehydration or repeated infections

Symptoms of CKD

Early CKD often has **no symptoms,** which is why testing is important.

As kidney function worsens, symptoms may include:

- Tiredness or weakness
- Swollen ankles, feet, or hands
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Itchy skin
- Changes in urination
- Confusion (especially in older adults)

These symptoms can be subtle and easily mistaken for normal ageing.

Changes in Urine:

Changes in Urine:

Early signs worth reporting include:

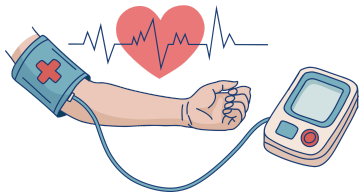
- New or persistent foamy urine
- Increased night-time toileting
- Sudden change in continence patterns
- Unusual urine appearance
- Reduced fluid intake alongside urine changes

How Is CKD Diagnosed?

Doctors usually diagnose CKD using simple tests:

- Blood test – checks kidney filtration (eGFR)
- Urine test – looks for protein or damage
- Blood pressure monitoring

Regular health checks help detect CKD early, especially in care settings.



Over to you:

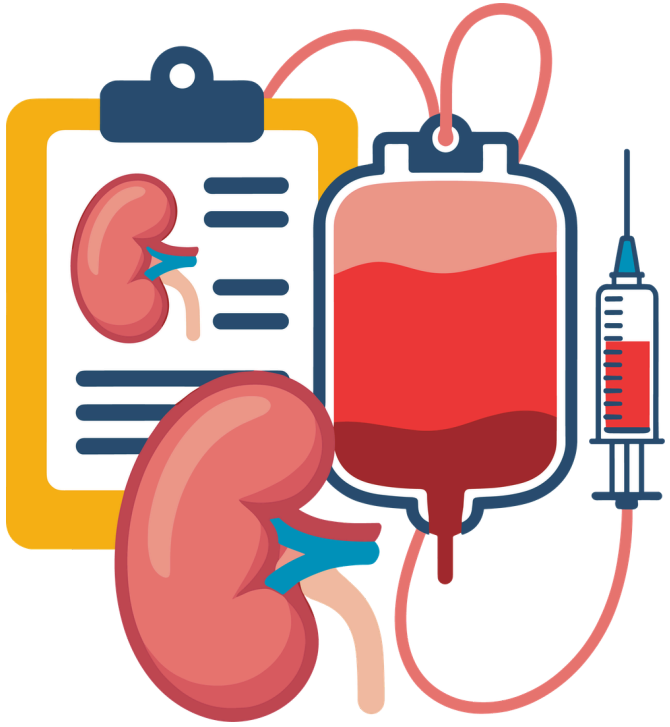
- Are staff aware of residents in the care setting who have a diagnosis of CKD?
- Are they aware of how this is being managed for each individual resident?
- Do these residents all have a person-centred care plan in Fusion detailing their care and support needs?
- Does the monitoring of fluids/blood pressure/medication take place as prescribed? Is this all captured within the Fusion care planning system? (using the Task function may help with this)

Can Chronic Kidney Disease Be Treated?

CKD usually **cannot be reversed**, but treatment can slow progression and improve quality of life.

Management May Include:

- Controlling blood pressure
- Managing diabetes
- Medication review
- Healthy hydration
- Diet adjustments
- Regular monitoring



In advanced stages, some people may require dialysis or supportive kidney care.

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Why CKD Awareness Matters in Care Homes

Care staff play an important role because they can notice early changes such as:

- Reduced fluid intake
- Swelling
- Increased confusion
- Changes in urine output

Early reporting helps prevent complications and hospital admissions.

Key Takeaway:

- Chronic Kidney Disease is a common, long-term condition where the kidneys gradually stop working as well as they should.
- It often develops silently, but with early detection, monitoring, and supportive care, many people live comfortably and safely with CKD for many years.

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