

Be kind to your kidneys and keep your blood pressure down

Issued by [Martina Nicholson Associates](#)

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It is almost unthinkable that two bean-shaped organs roughly the size of your fist can play such a vital role in keeping your body healthy. However, without these valuable organs functioning at their best, you can become seriously ill.

12 March marks World Kidney Day and this year the spotlight falls on blood pressure as one of the key symptoms and causes of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). "Few people give a second thought to their kidneys until they fall ill and develop CKD, but the truth is that it is in everyone's power to take care of their kidneys and protect them from future damage," cautions Noeleen Phillipson, CEO of National Renal Care (NRC).

According to the World Kidney Day Foundation: Communicable diseases have been replaced by chronic and non-communicable diseases - particularly cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus and chronic kidney disease - as the leading threat to public health and health budgets worldwide. Adding to this Phillipson explains: "While infectious diseases will decline as more vaccinations become available and awareness around them increases, chronic diseases in people over 30 years old will increase by as much as 17 percent."

In order to promote awareness around kidney disease, NRC and Netcare Hospitals will join forces on World Kidney Day to provide the public with a free opportunity to detect one of the factors that attributes to kidney failure, namely high blood pressure.

"When people suffer from high blood pressure it puts more strain on blood vessels throughout the body, including the kidneys. As a result of hypertension, over time if untreated, kidneys will become damaged and cannot filter waste from the blood or carry out its other jobs. By maintaining a healthy blood pressure, you do not only reduce your risk of kidney damage, but also your chances of experiencing a heart attack or stroke," explains Phillipson.

On World Kidney Day you can visit any of the following Netcare Hospitals to receive a free blood pressure screening in order to alert you to possible kidney related health-dangers:

Pretoria - Netcare Akasia Hospital
Cape Town - Netcare Blaauwberg Hospital
PE - Netcare Greenacres Hospital
KZN - Netcare St Augustine's Hospital
Gauteng - Netcare Milpark Hospital
- Netcare Sunward park Hospital
Bloemfontein - Netcare Universitas Hospital

A registered Dietician will also be available on the day to provide advice on diet and lifestyle related queries.

NRC and Netcare invite each and everyone to make good use of this free screening opportunity. "We also urge everyone to make a conscious decision to exercise more, live and eat healthily, limit intake of drinks containing a lot of sugar, caffeine and alcohol. In a nutshell: try to lead a balanced lifestyle, and drink water to satisfy your thirst" adds Phillipson.

In another bid to make a difference in people's lives that are afflicted by kidney failure, the NRC has embarked on a massive fund-raising initiative to raise money for kidney NGO's. "We are proud and excited to announce the JHB Camel Race that will be hosted at the Inanda Club in Johannesburg on Saturday, 14 March, hot on the heels of World Kidney Day. This fun-filled race will not only assist us in raising much-needed awareness surrounding World Kidney Day, but will also help us fulfill our goal of raising more than half a million rand for kidney NGO's," promises Phillipson.

“Just as a camel drinks 200 litres of water per day, a healthy human kidney filters 200 litres of blood per day,” explains Phillipson. NRC invites people to not only contribute to this fund-raising initiative, but also to start taking better care of their kidneys. “Remember, how you treat your kidneys today will definitely influence your future.”

What are the signs of kidney disease?

If your kidneys do not perform their function of ridding the body of harmful toxins, kidney failure will eventually poison your body. The following symptoms may occur:

- Swelling of the body
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Poor appetite
- Insomnia (sleeplessness)
- Body aches and pains
- Impairment of thought processes
- Headaches and high blood pressure

If you display any signs of these symptoms, you should see your doctor immediately.

How can I keep my kidneys healthy?

Many kidney diseases can be prevented by following these tips:

- If you have a family history of kidney disease, diabetes, hypertension or have HIV, you should have your urine and kidneys checked annually.
- Quit smoking. This is one of the most important lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of developing a kidney disease. Smokers are three times more likely to have reduced kidney function;
- Live life to it fullest. Being healthy and happy will have a positive influence on your mind and body;
- Nutrition. The food we eat plays a huge role in our health. By ensuring that you eat a balanced, nutritious diet you can help prevent kidney disease. A healthy diet can also help you shed some unwanted kilos as people who are overweight have a greater risk of developing diabetes and high blood pressure - both of which are major risk factors in kidney disease;
- To satisfy thirst, water is the recommended fluid. Drinks containing sugar, caffeine or alcohol all may cause or worsen health related problems and should be avoided or taken in moderation. The daily fluid intake should be increased in tropical or hot climates, by individuals who practice strenuous exercise and for those with certain medical conditions;
- Exercise. Walk, opt for the stairs instead of the lift and get your heart pumping blood to your organs. It can reduce your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes that in turn can increase your risk factors for kidney disease.

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