

Chronic Kidney Disease

Over 37 million adults in America have chronic kidney disease.

1 Introduction

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) refers to a gradual decrease in kidney function over time. The kidneys are integral to essential homeostatic processes such as waste filtration and blood pressure regulation. Loss of these vital functions due to CKD can cause severe illness or death.

2 Signs and Symptoms

It can be difficult to diagnose CKD as the more severe symptoms do not appear until the kidney has sustained irreparable damage. However, there are some milder signs and symptoms that may be present in earlier stages of the disease:

- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Appetite loss
- Difficulties sleeping
- Itchy skin
- Nausea
- High blood pressure
- Muscle cramps
- Increasingly frequent urination

3 Risk Factors

Although CKD can affect anyone, some factors may increase an individual's risk of contracting the disease, including:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Older age

Additionally, most kidney-related diseases (e.g. interstitial nephritis) have been linked to causing CKD.

4 Treatments

While there is no cure for CKD, some treatments can alleviate symptoms. In the early stages of CKD, patients are advised to make positive lifestyle changes and are often prescribed high blood pressure medication. As the disease advances, patients may require dialysis or a kidney transplant — depending on severity.

Although CKD may be unavoidable due to genetics or medical history, there are preventative steps that can be taken to reduce the risk. These include following a healthy diet and speaking frequently with a doctor if familial history indicates a higher risk of CKD.

Did you know?

1 in 3 Americans are at risk for kidney disease.

For more information on kidney disease and supportive resources please visit www.kidney.org.

References:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-kidney-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20354521>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-disease/treatment/>