KEEP YOUR KIDNEY HALE AND HEARTY

Diseases and doctors share the causes behind kidney As we observe World Kidney Day today, how to improve the organ's functioning by opting for a healthy lifestyle

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Located at the lowest level of the rib cage are our kidneys — one of the most important organs in the human body. Every year, World Kidney Day is commemorated on March 10 to raise awareness about kidney health, and how deterioration of kidneys can affect one's life.

We take this opportunity to help you improve your kidney function, and bust a few myths along the way.

"Kidneys play an important role to remove wastes and extra fluid from the body. Also, they remove acid that is produced by the cells of the body, besides maintaining a healthy balance of water, salts and minerals — such as sodium, calcium, phosphorus and potassium — in blood," says Dr Reetesh Sharma, director, Nephrology and Kidney Transplant Medicine, Asian Hospital, Faridabad. In the absence of this balance, nerves, muscles and other tissues may not work optimally.

Most kidney diseases are insidious in nature. So they can go unnoticed, unless tested. "It is advisable to consult a doctor if you experience symptoms like burning while passing urine, frequent urination, painful urination, and blood in urine, foamy or frothy urine, swelling of eyes or face, extreme tiredness or weakness or inadequate urine passage. Beyond the age of 40, regular urine tests and blood pressure checks are advised," chips in Dr BV Gandhi, mentor, Renal Sciences, Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital.

CAUSES THAT LEAD TO KIDNEY DISEASES

"Obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes are the major diseases which leads to kidney failure in adults; while in pediatric age group, birth defects are the major cause for kidney failure," says Dr Amit Agarwal, consultant, Nephrology Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, Delhi.

Early detection of kidney diseases can help in treatment through antibiotics, steroid treatment (as and when required), and antibiotics for urine infection or obstruction like stone can be removed.

HOW TO IMPROVE KIDNEY HEALTH

Dr Sunita Dube, founder of Aryan Medical Hospital and MedScapeIndia, shares the following tips:

Keeping oneself active and healthy can help avoid kidney diseases.

Avoid overdose of medicines. A frequent cause of kidney injury might be the use of overthe-counter (OTC) pain medications. If you use them on a regular basis for chronic

pain, headaches or arthritis, you must stop using them immediately.

Avoid smoking, tobacco products, and focus on eating fresh, naturally low-sodium foods such as cauliflower, blueberries, seafood and healthy grains. Maintain blood pressure and diabetes within prescribed range, and maintain normal weight.

Consume at least 2-2.5 litres of fluid every single day, along with water-rich foods and fruits like watermelon, muskmelon, cucumber, salad, buttermilk, etc.

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND BALANCED DIET CAN KEEP THE KIDNEYS HEALTHY. PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES LIKE WALKING, RUNNING, CYCLING, AND EVEN DANCING — ALL THESE CAN HELP KEEP KIDNEY DISEASES AT BAY.

Kidneys remove acid that is produced by the body cells, and maintain a healthy balance of water, salts and minerals.

REETESH SHARMA,

FOODS TO EAT

"Excess salt, protein supplement powders, over-thecounter painkillers, etc. can damage kidneys. Egg, paneer, pulses, cucumber, fish, chicken, cereals, and fruits like papaya and guava are highly beneficial," says Dr Ravi Bansal, senior consultant, Nephrology, PSRI Hospital, New Delhi.

However, patients with kidney disease should avoid high protein food items, processed food and non-vegetarian food.

"People feel low sodium salts and rock salts such as 'sendha and kala namak' are good for blood pressure control in renal failure, which is not the case. These salts are high in potassium… which can lead to fatal cardiac arrests, and hence should be avoided completely in patients having kidney problems," adds Dr Kabra.

Doctor