

The golden rules of kidney health

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THE GOLDEN RULES for kidney health are the golden rules for overall health: physical fitness; proper sleep; adequate nutrition; and the avoidance of vices like smoking. Drinking water, health experts said, is also the best supplement for one's kidneys.

"The cheapest treatment for the kidneys is water," said Dr. Eladio Miguel M. Peñaranda, Jr., a nephrology consultant at Makati Medical Center, in a March 8 webinar organized by the Philippine College of Physicians and the Philippine Society of Nephrologists.

While the advice to drink eight glasses of water a day is a reasonable goal, individual water needs depend on several factors, including height, exercise, environment, and overall health. According to the Mayo Clinic, adequate daily fluid intake — on average — is 15.5 cups or 3.7 liters of fluids a day for adult men, and 11.5 cups or 2.7 liters of fluids a day for adult women.

Two indicators of adequate fluid intake, the clinic added, are a colorless or light-yellow urine, and seldom feeling thirsty.

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

One in 10 adults worldwide have kidney disease, said Dr. Michelle Ozaeta-Alpuerto, a nephrologist from Quali Med Hospital Sta. Rosa and Unihealth Parañaque Hospital and Medical Center.

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), comes in five progressive stages and is caused by medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and a family history of kidney failure. Its signs and symptoms manifest only at stage 4, when the kidneys are already severely damaged, and stage 5, or kidney failure.

While there is no cure for CKD, medications and kidney transplants are treatment options.

Herbal supplements, meanwhile, are not recommended. "There are studies that show herbal supplements with certain ingredients, like aristolochic acid, cause damage to the kidneys," Dr. Alpuerto said in the vernacular. "These supplements have not been studied for use specifically for people with kidney disease."

Frequent intake of over-the-counter (OTC) painkillers like ibuprofen and mefenamic acid may also harm the kidneys. "Don't take OTC painkillers regularly," she said, since ibuprofen can damage the kidneys if taken frequently and for longer periods.