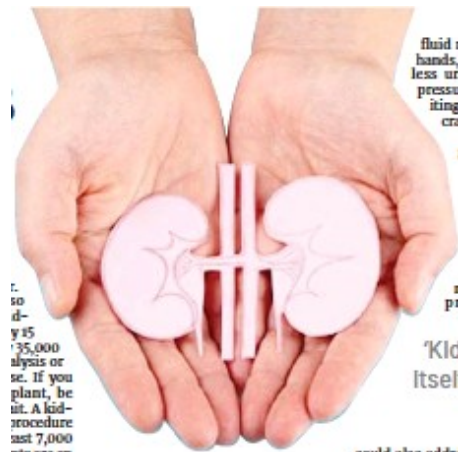


Be kind to your kidneys

Eight golden rules to keep them healthy

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Dialysis does what the kidneys can no longer do, filter waste and water from the blood. This life-saving treatment, however, comes with its own challenges: It may not be accessible to patients, and the prolonged, continuous treatment costs in the long run will weigh heavily on the family.



Few people know what glomerulonephritis and proteinuria are, much less how to pronounce them. But to those diagnosed with these kidney conditions, the signs are hard to miss. “Glomerulonephritis is characterized by pink or cola-colored urine due to the presence of red blood cells,” says Dr. Eladio Miguel M. Penaranda, Jr., chief of the nephrology section at Makati Medical Center. “Proteinuria, as the name suggests, is elevated protein level in the urine. This makes your urine appear foamy or bubbly. Both conditions are a sign of kidney disease.”

In the Philippines, kidney disease—specifically end stage renal disease—is a serious matter. “The seventh leading cause of death among Filipinos, kidney failure kills one Filipino every hour,” Dr. Josierina Sarmiento-Veloso points out. “New cases of kidney disease are on the rise by 15 percent annually, and nearly 35,000 Filipinos are undergoing dialysis or treatment for kidney disease. If you qualify for a kidney transplant, be prepared to spend and to wait. A kidney transplant is a costly procedure and, in the Philippines, at least 7,000 end stage renal disease patients are on a wait list that continues to grow.”

In their healthy, functioning state, our kidneys rid our body of waste and extra fluid, as well as acid produced by our body’s cells. The fist-sized, bean-shaped organs also help maintain the right balance of water, salt, and minerals in our blood, and create the hormones that control our blood pressure, make red blood cells, and keep our bones strong and healthy.

“Each of our kidneys is made up of millions of filtering units known as nephrons. Each nephron contains two important parts: the glomerulus, which filters your blood, and the tubule,

which removes waste and returns needed substances to your blood,” the expert explains. “When the filters are inflamed, usually from disease that runs in the family, or because of another disease like lupus or diabetes, they cannot expel the excess waste and fluid in the body. This leads to glomerulonephritis and proteinuria, as well as other signs, fluid retention in the face, hands, feet, and abdomen, less urination, high blood pressure, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, and muscle cramps at night.” Treatment for glomerulonephritis and proteinuria depends on their severity. “Mild cases and acute cases caused by an infection may resolve themselves naturally,” Dr. Penaranda states. “Your primary physician could also address the symptoms by recommending you eat less protein, salt, and potassium, control your blood pressure, and take diuretics to flush out excess fluid.”

Dialysis, meanwhile, does what the kidneys can no longer do, filter waste and water from the blood. This lifesaving treatment, however, comes with its own challenges: It may not be accessible to patients, and the prolonged, continuous treatment costs in the long run will weigh heavily on the family.

Of course, the best way to avoid kidney disease is to take good care of your kidneys in the first place. “Kidney disease usually does not present itself until you experience symptoms that have become irreversible.” “Being kind to our kidneys is actually easy to do,” says the doctor.

Here are his recommendations.

1. Be fit, be active.
2. Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
3. Check and control blood sugar levels.
4. Check and control blood pressure levels.
5. Appropriate fluid intake.
6. Don't smoke.
7. Do not take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory/pain medication regularly because it can damage the kidneys.
8. Get your kidney function checked if you have one or more of the highrisk factors.
 - Diabetes
 - Hypertension
 - Obesity
 - A family history of kidney disease

“Kidney disease usually does not present itself until you experience symptoms that have become irreversible,” says Dr. Penaranda. “With so many simple ways to keep your kidneys healthy, you do not have to let it reach that point.”