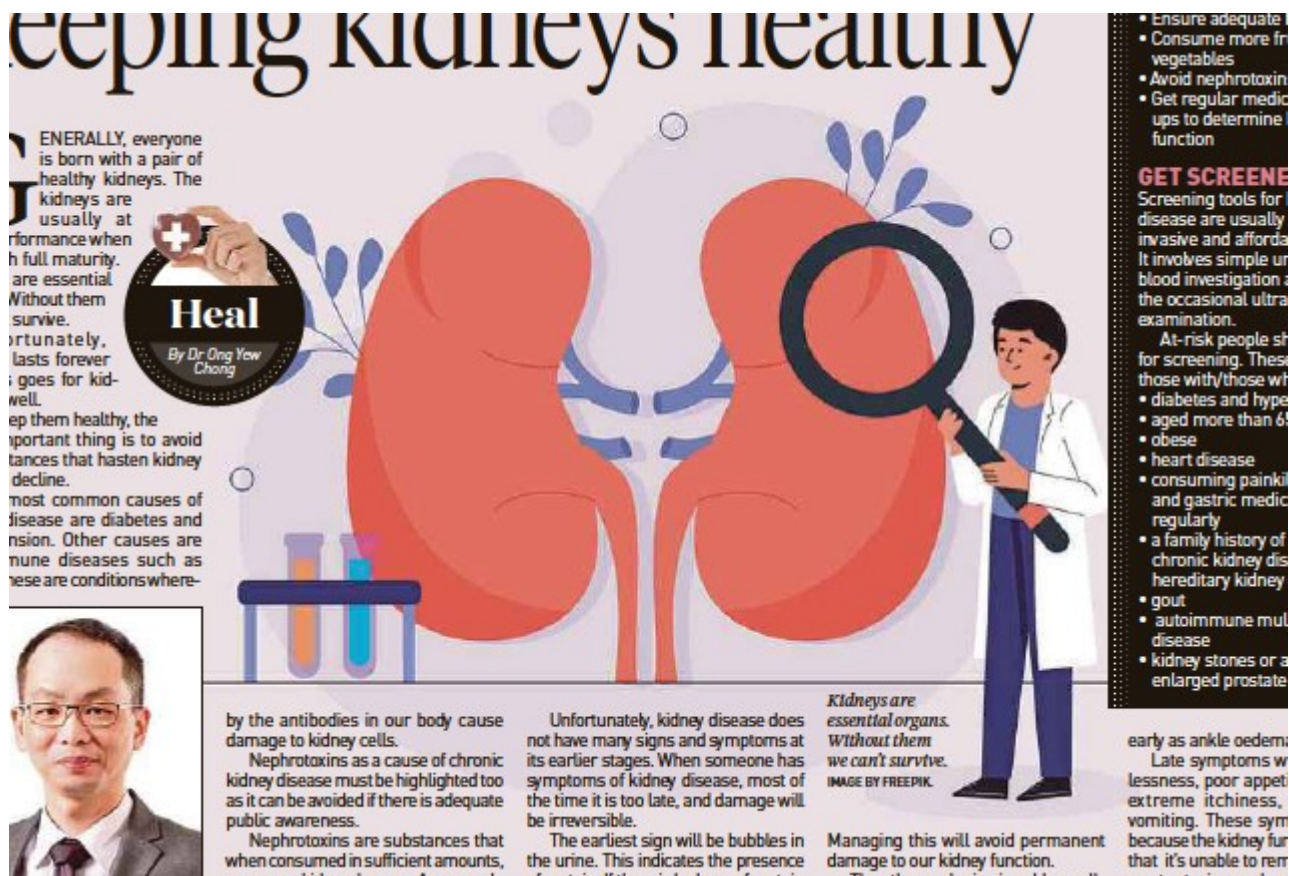


Keeping kidneys healthy

New Straits Times · 14 Mar 2023 · 13 · The writer is an internal medicine specialist at Pantai Hospital Cheras.

GENERALLY, everyone is born with a pair of healthy kidneys. The kidneys are usually at peak performance when we reach full maturity. Kidneys are essential organs. Without them we can't survive.



Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever and this goes for kidneys as well.

To keep them healthy, the most important thing is to avoid circumstances that hasten kidney function decline.

The most common causes of kidney disease are diabetes and hypertension. Other causes are autoimmune diseases such as lupus. These are conditions whereby the antibodies in our body cause damage to kidney cells.

Nephrotoxins as a cause of chronic kidney disease must be highlighted too as it can be avoided if there is adequate public awareness.

Nephrotoxins are substances that when consumed in sufficient amounts, can cause kidney damage. An example would be painkillers of the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory class.

Certain healthcare products and herbal medications are also known to cause kidney damage.

Unfortunately, kidney disease does not have many signs and symptoms at its earlier stages. When someone has symptoms of kidney disease, most of the time it is too late, and damage will be irreversible.

The earliest sign will be bubbles in the urine. This indicates the presence of protein. If there is leakage of protein into the urine, this indicates early kidney damage.

At this point, our kidney function may still be normal and protein in the urine or protein-uria can be reversible.

Managing this will avoid permanent damage to our kidney function.

The other early sign is ankle swelling. This is due to water retention in the body. One of the functions of the kidney is maintaining hydration and electrolyte balance. If this is impaired, it will lead to water retention, and this will present early as ankle oedema.

Late symptoms will be breathlessness, poor appetite, tiredness, extreme itchiness, nausea and vomiting. These symptoms occur because the kidney function is so low that it's unable to remove adequate waste, toxins and water from the body. Most of the time, by this stage, emergency dialysis is required.