# 8 ways to boost kidney health

## Finds out how to avoid kidney disease amid new warnings about the over-use of painkillers

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REACHING for anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen too often for pain relief could negatively affect kidney health, warn experts. Kidney Care UK and the National Pharmacy Association (NPA) have urged consumers to be cautious about frequently using NSAIDs (NonSteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs), particularly those at higher risk of kidney disease, such as individuals with diabetes or high blood pressure. Olivier Picard, chair of the NPA, said: "Medicines have the power to harm as well as to heal. Although NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, are effective and safe medicines, patients should be aware of their impact – particularly if a patient is at increased risk of developing kidney disease – and consider alternative medication where appropriate. "Pharmacists are experts in medicines and are best placed to offer advice to people who may be concerned about any potential longterm effect of some medicines and can help patients manage pain." Here, Fiona Loud, policy director at Kidney Care UK, explains what crucial roles our kidneys play and how to keep them healthy and happy. "We have two kidneys in our body, one on either side towards our back, and they are vital organs," says Fiona. "They help regulate our blood pressure, keep our bones healthy, filter our blood and help get rid of the toxins, and are an important part of our excretion system."




They also work very with the heart. "Keeping your blood pressure healthy keeps your kidneys healthy," says Fiona. "If your kidneys are not working so well, the heart has to pump harder and that places significant strain on the cardiovascular system."

Here are eight simple ways to keep your kidneys happy and healthy...

1. STAY HYDRATED

"Staying hydrated helps your kidneys filter out those toxins through your body and get rid of waste," says Fiona. "Try to aim for six to eight ight glasses of water a day." y."

2. EAT A HEALTHY DIET

T “Eating lots of fruit and vegetables helps keep your blood pressure and cholesterol healthy – and if you’re looking after your heart, you’re looking after your kidneys,” says Fiona. “Eating your five-a-day is great, and even adding fruit to cereal and using frozen vegetables, can all add up. Try to avoid ultra-processed foods.”

3. CHECK YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

“You can get your blood pressure checked very easily at a pharmacy, as many pharmacies have blood pressure machines,” says Fiona.

4. REDUCE YOUR SALT INTAKE

“Try to reduce your salt intake as too much can have a negative impact on blood pressure and could increase your risk of kidney stones,” says Fiona.

5. STAY ACTIVE

Staying active is crucial for kidney health by helping to manage risk factors associated with kidney disease, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. “Aiming for around 150 minutes of exercise a week is a really good thing to do to keep your kidneys healthy, as it helps get all the blood pumping around your body,” says Fiona.

6. REGULAR KIDNEY CHECK-UPS

“High blood pressure and diabetes are the two biggest risks for chronic kidney disease, so if you have diabetes or have high blood pressure, having regular kidney checks is incredibly important,” says Fiona.

7. GIVE UP SMOKING

Smokers are four times more likely than non-smokers to develop kidney failure, according to Kidney Care UK. “Smoking can cause the build-up of fatty deposits in your blood vessels which means that your heart has to work harder to pump the blood around your body, which raises your blood pressure,” explains Fiona. “Smoking can also increase your risk of kidney cancer.”

8.

“Our online kidney health checker chec is a quick and easy way to learn about your kidney kidn health and to check your risk of kidney disease,” says s Fiona.

■ Go to kidneycareuk.org

CHECK YOUR RISK ONLINE