

## BBQ for kidney health

### *The Health Column*

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Did you know it is possible for a person to lose up to 90% of their kidney function before experiencing any symptoms of kidney disease?

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a growing public health problem. Approximately 1 in 10 Australians aged 18 and over have evidence of CKD. In CKD, the kidneys slowly stop working over a period of months or years. The kidneys have many important functions in the body, including filtering the blood and adding excess water to other wastes to produce urine. The kidneys also produce and regulate several hormones that are important for heart, blood and bone health. People with CKD are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and death, as well as anaemia and bone disease.



Typically, early CKD has no symptoms, and despite affecting 1 in 10, many people are not even aware that they have kidney problems. One-third of Australians are at increased risk of developing CKD. You may be at increased risk of developing CKD if you:

- have diabetes
- have high blood pressure (hypertension)
- have established heart problems (heart failure or heart attack) or have had a stroke
- have a family history of kidney disease
- are obese
- are a smoker
- are over 60 years of age
- are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

If you are worried about your kidney health you should speak to your doctor. Symptoms indicative of kidney health concerns may include (but not be limited to):

- a change in the frequency and quantity of urine passed, especially at night (usually an increase at first)
- blood in the urine (haematuria)
- foaming urine
- puffiness around the eyes and ankles (oedema)
- pain in the back (under the lower ribs, where the kidneys are located)
- pain or burning when passing urine.

Your doctor may order tests to check for kidney disease, determine the degree of damage, and identify treatment options. Early detection of kidney disease is important. When detected early, medicines and other lifestyle changes can be used to manage CKD to prevent or slow progression. Patients with severe CKD, or kidney failure, need dialysis treatment to filter their blood (a key function of the kidneys), or a kidney transplant.

Your local pharmacy can help too. Many pharmacies offer professional services to help you control your diabetes or blood pressure, reduce your weight, or stop smoking. Managing these conditions can improve your kidney health and reduce your risk of developing CKD. Many medicines, including commonly used medicines for pain, can affect kidney health too. Pharmacists are medicines experts – if you have kidney problems or are at increased risk of developing CKD, pharmacists can provide advice on medicines you should avoid, and medicines which are excreted by the kidneys ('renally cleared').

Kidney Health Australia invites people to hold a Big Red BBQ fundraiser anywhere at any time. Registration is free, and Kidney Health Australia will send a free event pack in the mail. Proceeds raised from Big Red BBQ will go towards programs to promote good kidney health through education, advocacy, research and support. Further information is available at [www.bigredbbq.com.au](http://www.bigredbbq.com.au).

For more information on various health conditions you can get informative Fact Cards on different topics, including *High blood pressure* and *Staying a non-smoker*, from pharmacies that provide the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) Self Care health information program. Other Fact Cards may also be helpful depending on your individual situation – ask your pharmacist.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to [www.psa.org.au/selfcare](http://www.psa.org.au/selfcare), then click 'Find a *Self Care pharmacy* near you'.