

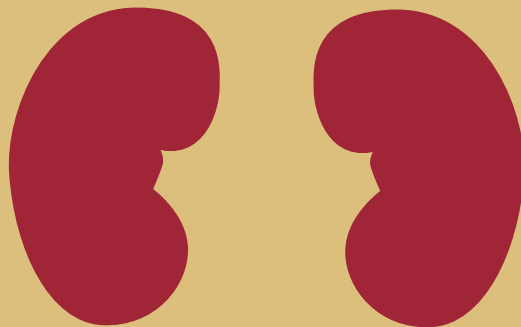
Kidneys

don't fail me

now

Have you ever wondered how your bones stay healthy or what exactly controls your blood pressure? Many of us take for granted the role our kidneys play in keeping us sturdy and strong. The pair of bean-shaped organs

known as kidneys perform crucial and sophisticated functions within our bodies, such as processing 200 quarts of blood to eliminate two quarts of excess waste and water through urine on a daily basis. Now that's IMPRESSIVE!



WARNING! POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS THAT CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE IF YOU ARE AT RISK:

- Stomach sickness
- Feeling dizzy or tired
- Swelling in the face, hands or feet
- Back pain
- Bloody or dark-colored urine
- High blood pressure
- Change in the number of times you go to the bathroom a day

WARNING! YOU ARE AT AN INCREASED RISK FOR KIDNEY DISEASE IF YOU:

- Have diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have a family history of kidney disease
- Have HIV/AIDS
- Have cardiovascular disease
- Are over 60 years of age
- Are African American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian

SOURCES:

National Kidney and Urologic Disease Information Clearing House (NKUDIC)

<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/Kudiseases/pubs/yourkidneys/#kidneys>

American Kidney Fund

www.kidneyfund.org

National Library of Medicine

www.nlm.nih.gov

Your kidneys are located near the middle of the back, just below the rib cage, one on each side of the spine. They work hard to:

- Assist in creating red blood cells through the hormone *erythropoietin*, which stimulates the bone marrow and generates the red blood cells
- Control chemicals in the body and keep bones healthy and strong through the hormone *calcitriol*, which is the active form of vitamin D
- Help maintain blood pressure levels through the hormone *renin*

Unfortunately, kidneys can become vulnerable when damage to the nephrons causes them to lose their filtering capacity. The damage can occur quickly, without any signs or symptoms to inform you of the harm inflicted. One guaranteed way to know if you are in danger of kidney disease, (also known as *renal disease*), is to visit your physician for routine check-ups.

Since kidney disease often goes undetected, it is imperative that you play an active role in your health and try to prevent any threats to your kidneys. At your next health care visit, talk to your physician about:

- Your blood pressure
- Your blood glucose
- Your GFR, or Glomerular Filtration Rate, which is the calculation of how efficiently the kidneys are filtering waste from the blood
- The amount of albumin in your urine

A positive collaboration between you and your physician will ensure healthy kidneys and provide you with appropriate treatment options if you are already at risk for kidney disease.

Need help finding a primary care physician or specialist that meets your needs? Visit www.stlukes-stl.com or call St. Luke's Physician Referral Service at 314-205-6060.