

Stages of Chronic Kidney Disease

About chronic kidney disease (CKD)

With chronic kidney disease, the kidneys don't usually fail all at once. Instead, kidney disease often progresses slowly over a period of years. This is good news because if CKD is caught early, medicines and lifestyle changes may help slow its progress and keep you feeling your best for as long as possible.

Five stages of chronic kidney disease

To help improve the quality of care for people with kidney disease, the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) created a guideline to help doctors identify each level of kidney disease. The NKF divided kidney disease into five stages. When the doctor knows what stage of kidney disease a person has they can provide the best care, as each stage calls for different tests and treatments.

Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR)

Glomerular filtration rate (GFR) is the best measure of kidney function. The GFR is the number used to figure out a person's stage of kidney disease. A math formula using the person's age, race, gender and their serum creatinine is used to calculate a GFR. A doctor will order a blood test to measure the serum creatinine level. Creatinine is a waste product that comes from muscle activity. When kidneys are working well they remove creatinine from the blood. As kidney function slows, blood levels of creatinine rise.

Below shows the five stages of CKD and GFR for each stage:

Stage 1 with normal or high GFR (GFR > 90 ml/min)

Stage 2 Mild CKD (GFR = 60-89 ml/min)

Stage 3 Moderate CKD (GFR = 30-59 ml/min)

Stage 4 Severe CKD (GFR = 15-29 ml/min)

Stage 5 End Stage CKD (GFR <15 ml/min)