

New evidence report reveals over half of all kidney failure cases in Australia caused by diabetes and hypertension

- Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a 'silent killer' and can cause a person to lose 90% of their kidney function without experiencing any symptoms.
- Chronic kidney disease frequently occurs alongside diabetes and cardiovascular disease – an estimated 29% of Australians have one or more of these conditions.
- Over 26,000 Australians live with kidney failure, which can often be prevented if kidney disease is detected early.

To mark World Kidney Health Day today, Kidney Health Australia has launched an Evidence Report detailing the extent of kidney disease in Australia, and its strong links with diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The report, *'Make the Link - Kidneys, Diabetes and Heart'* has been released ahead of Kidney Health Australia's Kidney Health Week. The awareness week will run from Monday 15th to Friday 21st March 2021. The focus this year is on the importance of early detection of kidney disease and urging people to check their risk factors at kidney.org.au/kidneyrisktest, and if at risk to seek a Kidney Health Check from their GP.

The Evidence Report has revealed the number of Australians at risk of chronic kidney disease is on the rise, due to the ageing population and risk-factor trends.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects every organ system in the body and damage accumulates over time. The kidneys are a vital organ and when functioning normally, remove waste and harmful substances from the blood. The kidneys also play a vital role in maintaining blood pressure and electrolyte balance. When there is a problem with kidney function, this balance is disturbed.

CKD, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are linked by common risk factors and connecting pathways in the body. According to Kidney Health Australia's report, an estimated 29% of Australian adults have one or more of these conditions. Any one of these conditions places a large burden on the Australian health system, on individuals and on families.

Shockingly, a person can lose 90% of their kidney function without experiencing any signs or symptoms of the disease. Kidney disease stages 1 to 3 are usually symptom free though with high-risk implications. Undiagnosed, kidney disease can rapidly progress to stages 4 and 5 when kidney function will fail, requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant (if suitable), to stay alive. Those with high blood pressure and diabetes are most at risk.

CEO of Kidney Health Australia Chris Forbes said early detection is key to tackling these shocking statistics, *'It's clear from the Evidence Report that more needs to be done to prevent Australians from developing kidney disease. Diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney failure in Australia and it's our mission to educate the public on knowing the early signs. The sobering fact is chronic kidney disease significantly increases risks of premature death and we know that with the right measures in diet, lifestyle and treatment it can be slowed down or even stopped. This World Kidney Day, I encourage anyone who thinks they might be at risk to visit their healthcare provider and ask for a kidney health check.'*

A Kidney Health Check is conducted by a GP and consists of a blood test to check how well the kidneys are filtering the blood, together with a urine test to check for protein in the urine and a blood pressure check.

Data from the [Australian Health Survey](#) shows that 10% of all Australian adults have biomedical signs of CKD, which is almost double the rate of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Since 2009, admissions for dialysis have increased by 3.9% on average each year.

Over 26,000 Australians live with kidney failure (dialysis or kidney transplant), which shortens their life and has a major impact on the quality of life for themselves, their families and community.

Sadly, the burden of CKD is unevenly distributed across the Australian population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience a higher burden of CKD, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Rates of death in association with these conditions also increase with greater socio-economic disadvantage. Kidney Health Australia's Evidence Report revealed that dialysis currently accounts for 13% of all hospitalisations Australia-wide, and 34% of all hospitalisations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

CKD is also a major public health problem in Australia, costing the health system an estimated \$5.1 billion each year. The cumulative cost of treating all current and new cases of kidney failure with dialysis or kidney transplantation from 2009 to 2020 is estimated to be between \$11.3 billion and \$12.3 billion.

Many people living with kidney disease face large out-of-pocket costs too. According to the Report, patients receiving care for CKD Stages 3–5 faced costs of over \$900 per quarter on average. More than half of households reported economic hardship as a result of out-of-pocket costs of CKD.

Mr Forbes said Kidney Health Australia's goal was to help more people preserve their kidney health and prevent progression to kidney failure, *'The physical, mental and financial burden of chronic kidney disease can be overwhelming for individuals and their*

families. That's why we want more people diagnosed earlier so they can prevent progression to kidney failure and can maintain a good quality of life.'

Jodie Jeeves from Victoria knows firsthand the devastating effects CKD can have. Tragically, Ms Jeeve's husband Shane, a passionate supporter of Kidney Health Australia's efforts to promote early detection, died from a heart attack in December 2020, after being diagnosed with kidney disease nine years earlier. Shane was just 48 years of age and left behind his wife and five daughters.

Mrs Jeeves said, "Right up until he was diagnosed, Shane was a fit and active person. His kidney disease was only picked up through discovering he had high blood pressure. Our life really changed when he reached kidney failure and had to have regular dialysis to survive. Because of that, he was really passionate about promoting early detection and preventing other families going through what he went through. Our lives will never be the same now that he's gone."

This year Kidney Health Week is a particularly important one, as it will be a tribute to Shane Jeeves. Kidney Health Australia's #nofilter campaign featuring Shane's wife Jodie and his five daughters will be launched during Kidney Health Week to carry on the fight in Shane's name and get the message out about the importance of early detection.

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Interviews

Chris Forbes, CEO, Kidney Health Australia
Mrs Jodie Jeeves, Carer Advocate
Associate Professor, Shilpa Jesudason, Nephrologist
Professor of General Practice, Tim Usherwood
Spokesperson, Diabetes Australia
Spokesperson, National Heart Foundation

About Kidney Health Australia

Kidney Health Australia are a leading voice for the kidney community, providing vital resources and support to people affected by kidney disease and working closely with clinical and research community to support treatment and research improvements, so that one day every Australian can live with better kidney health.

References

- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/chronic-kidney-disease/chronic-kidney-disease/contents/how-many-australians-have-chronic-kidney-disease>
- <https://kidney.org.au/>