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## Diabetic Nephropathy

### What is diabetic nephropathy?

Diabetes can affect many parts of the body, including the kidneys. In healthy kidneys, many tiny blood vessels remove waste products from your body. These vessels can be damaged if diabetes is not controlled. This damage can cause kidney disease, which is also called nephropathy (say: nef-rah-puh-thee). If the damage is bad enough, your kidneys could stop working.

### How do I know if diabetes has hurt my kidneys?

Your doctor will test your urine for protein. This test will tell your doctor if there is a problem with the way your kidneys are working. Your doctor may also want to do a blood test to see how much damage has been done to the kidneys. Your doctor will find out if it is diabetes or something else that is hurting your kidneys.

Unless the damage is severe, you probably will not have any symptoms. If your kidneys stop working, your feet and ankles may swell. You also might feel weak or not want to eat.

### What can I do to slow down the damage?

The following are some of the most important things you can do to protect your kidneys:

- Keep your blood pressure lower than 130 over 80. Your doctor may give you medicine to help lower your blood pressure.
- Control your blood sugar level. Your doctor may give you medicine to help lower your blood sugar level.
- Stick to your diet. Ask your doctor how many calories and carbohydrates and how much protein you should eat.
- Be physically active every day.
- Take the medicines your doctor prescribes for you. Check with your doctor before taking any new medicines. This includes vitamins, herbal medicines and over-the-counter medicines.
- Keep all of your doctor appointments.
- Stop smoking.

### What happens if my kidneys stop working?

Even with the right treatments, diabetic nephropathy can get worse over time. Your kidneys could stop working. This is called kidney failure. If this happens, waste products build up in your body. This can cause vomiting, weakness, confusion and coma.

If you have kidney failure, your doctor will refer you for dialysis (say: die-al-uh-sis). In dialysis, a machine is used to take waste products out of the blood. One kind of dialysis has to be done in a clinic. For another kind of dialysis, the machine is so small it can be strapped to your body while you go about your daily activities.

### Special Instructions: