



### Section 3: 10 Symptoms of Kidney Disease

Many people who have chronic kidney disease don't know it, because the early signs can be very subtle. It can take many years to go from chronic kidney disease (CKD) to kidney failure. Some people with CKD live out their lives without ever reaching kidney failure.

However, for people at any stage of kidney disease, knowledge is power. Knowing the symptoms of kidney disease can help you get the treatment you need to feel your best. If you or someone you know has one or more of the following symptoms of kidney disease, or you are worried about kidney problems, see a doctor for blood and urine tests. Remember, many of the symptoms can be due to reasons other than kidney disease. **The only way to know the cause of your symptoms is to see your doctor.**

Symptoms and why they happen	What patients say about symptoms
<p><b>1) Changes in urination</b> Kidneys make urine, so when the kidneys are failing, the urine may change. How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You may have to get up at night to urinate</li> <li>● Urine may be foamy or bubbly</li> <li>● You may urinate more often, or in greater amounts than usual, with pale urine</li> <li>● You may urinate less often, or in smaller amounts than usual, with dark colored urine</li> <li>● Your urine may contain blood</li> <li>● You may feel pressure or have difficulty urinating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“When you go to use the restroom, you couldn't get it all out. And it would still feel just like tightness down there be so much pressure.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“My urine is what I had started noticing. Then frequently going to the bathroom, and get there, nothing's happening. You think, 'Hey, I've got to go to the john,' and you get there: two, three drops.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I started having frequent urination a lot, basically before, because of my diabetes and my high blood pressure. And I used to always wonder how come I have to go to the bathroom so much. I can't ride a bus, you know, too often without having to jump off. But, anyway, at one point about 7 years ago, I started having blood in my urine.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I was passing blood in my urine. It was so dark it looked like grape Kool-Aid®. And when I went to the hospital they thought I was lying about what color it was.”</i></li> </ul>



**Section 3: 10 Symptoms of Kidney Disease *cont.***

<b>Symptoms and why they happen</b>	<b>What patients say about symptoms</b>
<p><b>2) Swelling in the legs, ankles, feet, face, and/or hands</b>            Failing kidneys don't remove extra fluid, which builds up in your body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I was out celebrating, and my right hand swelled up. And I didn't understand why it was swelling up. My girlfriend kept trying to get me to go to the hospital, but I didn't want to. I finally blacked out and she drove me to the hospital. The doctor told me that I would have a dye test done to find out about my kidney, and come to find out it was high blood pressure that knocked my kidneys out, and I've been on dialysis ever since.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I remember a lot of swelling in my ankles. My ankles were so big I couldn't get my shoes on.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“My sister, her hair started to fall out, she was losing weight, but her face was really puffy, you know, and everything like that, before she found out what was going on with her. Going to work one morning, my left ankle was swollen, real swollen, and I was very exhausted just walking to the bus stop. And I knew then that I had to see a doctor.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>3) Fatigue</b>            Healthy kidneys make a hormone called erythropoietin (a-rith'-ro-po'-uh-tin) that tells your body to make oxygen-carrying red blood cells. As the kidneys fail, they make less erythropoietin. With fewer red blood cells to carry oxygen, your muscles and brain become tired very quickly. This condition is called <i>anemia</i>, and it can be treated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I was constantly exhausted and didn't have any pep or anything.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I would sleep a lot. I'd come home from work and get right in that bed.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“If I'm in the market or something, I have to stop and rest because my legs kind of give up on me a bit. And I just kind of push myself to do the walking because I want my legs to be strong.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“It's just like when you're extremely tired all the time. Fatigued, and you're just drained, even if you didn't do anything, just totally drained.”</i></li> </ul>



**Section 3: 10 Symptoms of Kidney Disease *cont.***

<b>Symptoms and why they happen</b>	<b>What patients say about symptoms</b>
<p><b>4) Skin rash/itching</b> Kidneys remove wastes from the bloodstream. When the kidneys fail, the build-up of wastes in your blood can cause severe itching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“It’s not really a skin itch or anything, it’s just right down to the bone. I had to get a brush and dig. My back was just bloody from scratching it so much.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“My skin had broke out, I was itching and scratching a lot.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>5) Metallic taste in mouth/ammonia breath</b> A build-up of wastes in the blood (called <i>uremia</i>) can make food taste different and cause bad breath. You may also notice that you stop liking to eat meat, or that you are losing weight because you just don’t feel like eating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Foul taste in your mouth. Almost like you’re drinking iron.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“One thing that I noticed was it seemed as though my breath would smell a bit like household ammonia.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“You don’t have the appetite you used to have.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Before I started dialysis, I must have lost around about 10 pounds.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>6) Nausea and vomiting</b> A severe build-up of wastes in the blood (<i>uremia</i>) can also cause nausea and vomiting. Loss of appetite can lead to weight loss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I had a lot of itching, and I was nauseated, throwing up all the time. I couldn’t keep anything down in my stomach.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“When I got the nausea, I couldn’t eat and I had a hard time taking my blood pressure pills.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>7) Shortness of breath</b> Trouble catching your breath can be related to the kidneys in two ways. First, extra fluid in the body can build up in the lungs. And second, anemia (a shortage of oxygen-carrying red blood cells) can leave your body oxygen-starved and short of breath.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“At the times when I get the shortness of breath, it’s alarming to me. It just fears me. I think maybe I might fall or something so I usually go sit down for awhile.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I couldn’t sleep at night. I couldn’t catch my breath, like I was drowning or something. And, the bloating, can’t breathe, can’t walk anywhere. It was bad.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“You go up a set of stairs and you’re out of breath, or you do work and you get tired and you have to stop.”</i></li> </ul>



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<b>Symptoms and why they happen</b>	<b>What patients say about symptoms</b>
<p><b>8) Feeling cold</b> Anemia can make you feel cold all the time, even in a warm room.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I notice sometimes I get real cold, I get chills.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Sometimes I get real, real cold. It could be hot, and I’d be cold.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>9) Trouble concentrating, dizziness</b> Anemia related to kidney failure means that your brain is not getting enough oxygen. This can lead to memory problems, trouble with concentration, and dizziness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I know I mentioned to my wife that my memory—I couldn’t remember what I did last week, or maybe what I had 2 days ago. I couldn’t really concentrate, because I like to work crossword puzzles, and read a lot.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I was always tired and dizzy.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Well, it got to the point, like, I used to be at work, and all of the sudden I’d start getting dizzy. So I was thinking maybe it was my blood pressure or else diabetes was going bad. That’s what was on my mind.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>10) Leg/flank pain</b> Some people with kidney problems may have pain in the back or side related to the affected kidney. Polycystic kidney disease, which causes large, fluid-filled cysts on the kidneys and sometimes the liver, can cause pain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“About 2 years ago, I was constantly going to the bathroom all the time, the lower part of my back was always hurting and I was wondering why... and they diagnosed that kidney problem.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“And then you’re having to get up all time through the night, and then you have the side ache, a backache, and you can’t move.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“At night, I would get a pain in my side. It was worse than labor pain. And I’d be crying and my husband would get up, everybody, rubbing my legs.”</i></li> </ul>