



# **VA/DOD CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE FOR THE PRIMARY CARE MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE**

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Department of Defense**

## **Patient Summary**

### **QUALIFYING STATEMENTS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) guidelines use the best and most recent information that is available at the time they are published. Guidelines provide information that providers, healthcare team members, and patients can use to provide better care for individuals with chronic kidney disease (CKD). They do not define a standard of care and should not be used in this way. They are also not the only option for the management of CKD.

This Clinical Practice Guideline is based on a complete and organized review of both clinical studies and studies about how diseases affect the health and illness of groups of people. A panel of experts from a number of clinical fields developed this Guideline. The Guideline clearly explains how different care options relate to health outcomes. To do this, the experts rated both the quality of the clinical studies and the strength of the recommendations.

It is normal for providers to vary in how they plan to care for patients with CKD because they consider the needs of each patient, the available resources, and the limits that are unique to their healthcare setting or type of practice. Healthcare professionals should assess how well these Guidelines apply to each patient and their clinical setting or situation. Patients can use the information in this Guideline to understand the different ways that CKD can be treated. This will help you discuss management options with your provider and team. Working together, you can create a personalized treatment plan that meets your needs.

These guidelines do not represent VA or TRICARE policy. The Guideline recommendations for specific tests and/or treatments do not guarantee coverage of the patient's care by civilian providers or healthcare facilities. You can find more information on current TRICARE benefits at [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) or by contacting your regional TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor.

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## I. What is chronic kidney disease?

- Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a condition in which your kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood as well as they should. This means waste from the blood remains in the body and may cause other health problems.
- CKD is one of the most common serious medical conditions affecting adults in the United States.
- CKD can range from mild, where you might not have any symptoms, to severe, where the kidneys stop working and dialysis or a kidney transplant are needed.
- People with CKD have a higher chance of developing heart disease.

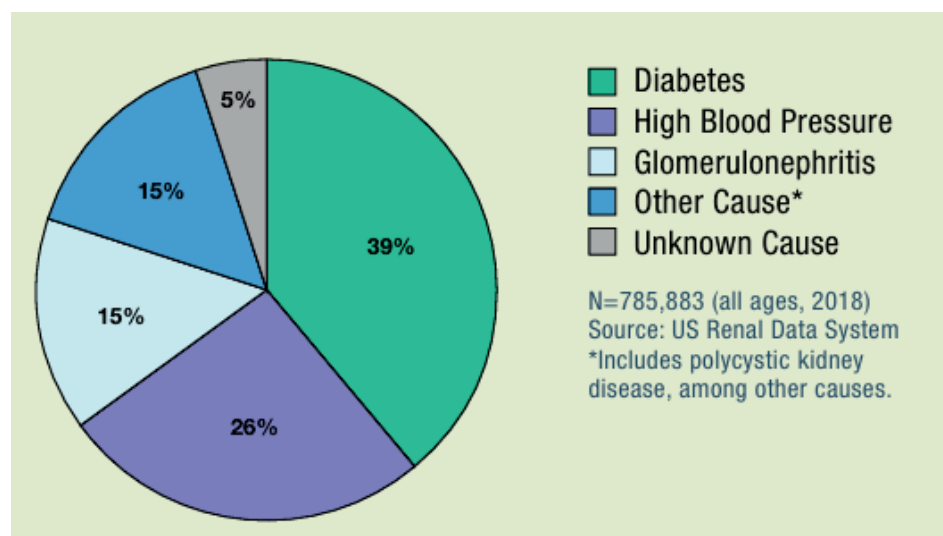
### Did You Know?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than 15% of adults in the U.S. – more than 37 million people – may have CKD.
- The prevalence of CKD in the Veteran population is estimated to be a third higher than in the general population.
- The Veteran's Health Administration currently cares for over 200,000 Veterans with moderate to severe kidney disease.

## II. What causes CKD?

- For many people, CKD is caused by other health problems such as diabetes or high blood pressure. The figure below shows the reported causes of kidney failure.

**Reported Causes of Kidney Failure in the U.S.**



Source: <https://nccd.cdc.gov/CKD/Documents/Chronic-Kidney-Disease-in-the-US-2021-h.pdf>

- The risk of developing CKD increases among people over 50 years of age and peaks after 70 years of age. Some other risk factors for CKD include:
  - A personal or family history of kidney disease
  - Other co-occurring conditions (e.g., chronic heart failure)
  - Systemic illness (e.g., infection with human immunodeficiency virus [HIV])
  - Race and ethnicity (e.g., African American, Hispanic, Native American)

### III. How is CKD diagnosed?

- CKD is diagnosed using a blood test to determine the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) and a urine test to check if your kidneys are leaking albumin into your urine (measured by the urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio).
- The eGFR and urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio together provide important information about the severity of your kidney disease, help guide treatment decisions, and predict your risk of disease progression.
- Ultrasound and other diagnostic tests may be used to gather more information about the cause of CKD.

What is eGFR?
This value estimates your level of kidney function and determines your stage of kidney disease. Your healthcare provider can calculate it from the results of your blood creatinine test, your age, and sex.
What is albuminuria or proteinuria?
Albumin is a protein normally found in the blood that can pass into the urine when the kidneys are damaged. When you have albumin (protein) in your urine, it is called “albuminuria” or “proteinuria”.

### IV. How is CKD treated?

- For many patients with CKD, medications, blood pressure control, and other strategies can slow the progression of kidney disease.
- Your individual treatment plan will be tailored to the stage and cause of your CKD.
- Talk to your provider (e.g., doctor, nurse practitioner, pharmacist) about appropriate medications and strategies to prevent worsening of CKD, including therapies for diabetes and blood pressure control.
- There are a number of medications that may slow CKD progression, depending on your individual circumstances. These may include but are not limited to:
  - Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEI) or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB)
  - Sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 inhibitor (SGLT2i)

- Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist (GLP-1 RA)
- Non-steroidal mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist (nsMRA)
- People with CKD have an increased risk of heart disease. Discuss heart disease prevention strategies with your provider.
- Your provider may recommend a statin (cholesterol-lowering medication). The VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline on CKD recommends that patients with CKD use a statin to prevent heart attacks and other heart problems.
- When you see a new healthcare provider, inform them that you have CKD – this may affect which medications they prescribe (or avoid), and dosages may need to be adjusted due to your CKD.
- Most people with CKD do not require dialysis or a kidney transplant, but it's important to discuss your risk with your provider.

## V. What can I do to manage my kidney disease (fill in)?

- Healthy lifestyle – maintain an ideal body weight, exercise, eat a healthy diet, don't smoke, and talk with a registered dietitian. My goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Control sugar levels if you have diabetes.
- Control my blood pressure. My blood pressure goal is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Take these medications to slow progression of kidney disease: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Avoid these medications that can worsen kidney disease: NSAIDs such as ibuprofen and naproxen.
- Other things I can do: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## VI. What should I ask my care team?

Here are some questions you might consider asking:

- What caused my kidney disease?
- What medications can I take to slow the progression of kidney disease?
- What medications can I take to prevent heart disease?
- What medications, including over the counter medications, should I avoid?
- How will my kidney function be monitored? Which tests will help track my CKD?
- What is my risk of kidney failure requiring dialysis or kidney transplant?
- Is there a special diet I should follow?
- Can CKD affect my health in other ways?
- Should I see a kidney provider?

Make sure to ask about anything else that seems unclear or concerning to you. Your health care team is here to help you understand and manage your condition effectively.

## **VII. Where can I find more information?**

- VA Kidney Program Website: <https://www.va.gov/health/services/renal/>
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH): <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/>
- The National Kidney Foundation (NKF): <https://www.kidney.org/>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/kidney-disease/index.html>
- The National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDDEP): <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/kidney-disease>

*Access to the full guideline and additional resources are available at the following link: <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/CD/ckd/>*