



## PROTECTING YOUR KIDNEYS MEANS PROTECTING YOUR HEART

*Small changes can make a big difference.*

Your kidneys and heart are more connected than you might think. When your kidneys are under stress, it can strain your blood vessels and increase your risk for heart disease. Likewise, heart problems can put extra pressure on your kidneys. Taking care of one helps protect the other.

### HOW KIDNEY STRESS AFFECTS THE HEART

Your kidneys act like filters for your blood, removing waste and balancing fluids. When they're under stress, it can cause subtle changes in your blood vessels, making them less flexible and healthy. These vascular changes (changes to your blood vessels) can raise your blood pressure and make it harder for your heart to pump efficiently. Over time, that added strain can affect both your kidney and heart function.

Even early signs of kidney stress can signal that your blood vessels throughout the body, including in the heart, may be under extra pressure. One way healthcare providers look for early kidney stress is through a simple urine test called uACR (urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio), which can help identify kidney changes early and signal increased heart risk.

**Learn more about the uACR test that acts as an early warning sign of kidney damage and future heart disease.**

### WHY DAILY CHOICES MATTER

Because kidney and heart health are so closely tied to blood vessel health, the steps that protect your blood vessels help protect both organs. That's where everyday choices, like what you eat and drink, can make a meaningful difference. Nutrition plays a powerful role in reducing inflammation, supporting circulation, and easing strain on both the kidneys and the heart.

### NUTRITION TIPS THAT SUPPORT BOTH ORGANS

You don't have to overhaul your diet overnight. Focus on gradual, lasting changes that reduce inflammation, improve circulation, and protect your blood vessels.

1. **Reduce excess salt.** Too much sodium can raise blood pressure and force your kidneys to work harder. Aim to flavor foods with herbs, spices, citrus, or vinegar instead of salt.
2. **Eat more plants.** Vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, and whole grains are rich in antioxidants and fiber that support heart and kidney function.
3. **Find your protein balance.** Protein is important, but large amounts, especially from red and processed meats, can burden your kidneys. Try including fish, poultry, or plant proteins like lentils and tofu.
4. **Stay hydrated.** Water helps your kidneys flush toxins and keeps blood flowing smoothly, but balance is key—your doctor can guide how much is right for you.

## KEEP AN EYE ON BLOOD PRESSURE AND BLOOD SUGAR

High blood pressure and high blood sugar are two of the biggest drivers of kidney and heart disease.

- Check your blood pressure regularly, at home or at your pharmacy.
- Stay on top of blood sugar testing if you have diabetes or prediabetes.
- Take medications as prescribed—many protect both your kidneys and heart even if you feel fine.

## START SMALL, STAY CONSISTENT

Better health doesn't come from perfection—it comes from progress.

- Swap one salty meal a week for a homemade version.
- Add one extra vegetable a day.
- Go for a 10-minute walk after dinner.
- Make sure your doctor or healthcare provider is testing your uACR and checking your blood pressure every few months to track changes.

Each small choice builds toward stronger kidneys, a healthier heart, and a longer, more active life.

**Remember:** Protecting your kidneys is also protecting your heart. Ask your healthcare provider how you can personalize your plan for both.

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