

# Renal Digest

FOR PATIENTS  
SPRING 2006 EDITION



Institute of Kidney  
Lifescience Technologies  
[www.kidneylifescience.ca](http://www.kidneylifescience.ca)

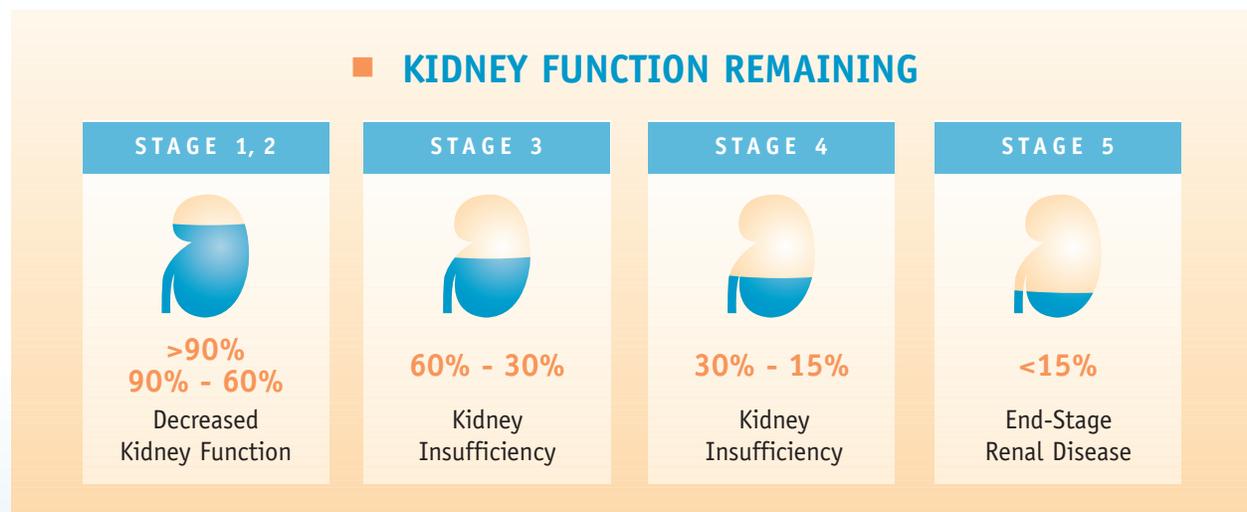


## About 1.9 million Canadians have chronic kidney disease (CKD). Could you be one of them?

Your kidneys are two kidney-bean shaped organs, each about the size of a clenched fist, that perform very important functions in your body:

- ▶ They remove wastes from your blood.
- ▶ They regulate water and mineral (salt) levels in your body.
- ▶ They produce hormones that control other important body functions.

With CKD, the kidneys don't function as well as they should. CKD can be divided into five stages depending on the amount of kidney function remaining:



Stage 5 is the final stage of kidney disease and is also known as end-stage renal disease, or ESRD. People with Stage 5 CKD have very little kidney function left and require renal replacement therapy—dialysis or a kidney transplant—to stay alive.

## Are You At Increased Risk for CKD?

CKD can strike any one at any age. However, certain factors increase a person's risk of developing CKD:

- ▶ **Diabetes**
- ▶ **High blood pressure**
- ▶ **A family history of kidney disease**
- ▶ **Older age (over 60 years)**
- ▶ **Aboriginal, Asian, South Asian, Pacific Island, African/Caribbean, and Hispanic ethnicity**

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these risk factors. A simple blood test can tell your doctor a lot about the health of your kidneys. Your doctor can also check your urine for abnormalities.

## What Are the Signs of CKD?

In the early stages of CKD, there may be no warning signs or symptoms. In many cases, the problem may go undetected until the kidneys are severely damaged.

Some signs and symptoms that may indicate kidney disease are:

- ▶ **High blood pressure**
- ▶ **Passage of bloody, cloudy or tea-coloured urine**
- ▶ **Foaming in the urine**
- ▶ **Protein in the urine**
- ▶ **Frequent passing of urine during the night**
- ▶ **Passing less urine or difficulty passing urine**
- ▶ **Puffy eyes, hands and feet**
- ▶ **Fatigue**
- ▶ **Nausea and vomiting**
- ▶ **Poor appetite and weight loss**
- ▶ **Muscle cramping**
- ▶ **Bad taste in mouth**
- ▶ **Decreased sexual desire**

## What Can You Do to Reduce Your Risk?

Although there is no cure for CKD, there are a lot of things that you can do to reduce your risk of CKD or to slow its progression. Not everyone with CKD progresses to ESRD. The following tips can help you reduce your risk of needing dialysis or a kidney transplant.

- ▶ **Work with a dietician to develop a healthy eating plan.**
- ▶ **Get regular physical exercise.**
- ▶ **Maintain good control of your blood pressure.**
- ▶ **If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugars under control.**
- ▶ **If you smoke, stop.**

**If CKD is found early, you can manage it to prevent or delay kidney failure and avoid cardiovascular disease.**

**Talk to your doctor today.**



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# Patient Empowerment: A Success Story



Patient empowerment is not just a theory. Many empowered patients are doing very well with CKD. Brian Quinlan, a “graduate” of the SRDP, is one such patient.

Brian, a 43-year-old high-energy individual who has worked for a major gas company for the last 20 years, exudes a zest for life and has big plans for his future—despite the fact that he was diagnosed six years ago with CKD and received a new kidney two years ago. Brian exemplifies what a positive attitude, knowledge about his disease, and a remarkable health care team can mean for someone living with CKD.

## Q How were you diagnosed with CKD?

During a routine physical to upgrade my driving license about six years ago, my GP found protein in my urine. After a nephrologist ran some tests, it turned out I had lost 60-80% of my kidney function.

## Q Did you have any symptoms of CKD? What about risk factors?

Sometimes my hands would swell up like balloons. My doctor ran a lot of tests but nothing showed up until I went for my physical. I don't have diabetes and there is no family history of CKD. I had high blood pressure when I was 19 or 20, but it has been managed with medication ever since.

## Q How long were you on dialysis?

I was on dialysis for four years before I got my new kidney. I was on PD for two years and then switched to overnight dialysis. My health care team was fantastic in getting me set up for this and my nurse was outstanding. She came to my house to train me on the machine.

## Q Did you work through all of this?

Yes. My employer was extremely understanding and accommodating. They set me up with a room at work so I could do my PD. The only time I didn't work was for six months while I stabilized on dialysis, and for six months after I received my donor kidney. Other than that, I've worked every day since my diagnosis.

## Q There must have been some tough times for you. How did you get through them?

Sure, there were days that were tough. Especially after my surgery, when I was in bed a lot. But you know, if you're serious about getting better, you need to set goals and tasks for yourself. I would wake up and make myself a goal, like “today, I'm going for a walk.” I needed to find something productive to do. Once I was walking, I might decide to go to the store to pick up the lottery tickets. Being able to set and achieve goals helped keep me going. And the walking was great exercise that helped with my recovery after surgery.

You know, I didn't do this all by myself. My wife, Lynn, stood by me through all of this. Her being there was really important in my recovery. And my medical team at Scarborough General. They saved my life, and they're the best team I know.

## Q What advice would you give to CKD patients facing or currently on dialysis?

Listen to your team. They're there to help you, and they give you a ton of very important information. If you “play by the rules,” you can do very well. It's the patients that don't accept the power that is given to them that tend to do poorly. The health care team can't do it for you—you have to be in charge of your own treatment.

**Brian hasn't let his CKD slow him down. He recently bought a Harley Davidson motorcycle and this summer he intends to ride the Cabot Trail.**

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