



Is my child
at risk for
kidney
disease?



NKDEP National Kidney Disease
Education Program

A program of the National Institutes of Health

Some diseases and conditions put children at risk for kidney disease. A urine test is used to check for kidney disease before symptoms appear. Read more to learn about risk factors, the urine test, and treatment for kidney disease.



How do I know if my child is at risk for kidney disease?

Your child may be at risk for kidney disease if he or she:

- is overweight
- has pain in the back, side, or lower belly
- complains of burning or pain when urinating, has changes in the urine, or often wets his or her pants
- has unexplained fever
- has swelling in the feet, ankles, or legs
- wakes up with swollen eyelids
- becomes dehydrated often
- has a family member with kidney disease

Other conditions that may put your child at increased risk for kidney disease include:

- SGA (small for gestational age) or born premature
- a growth disorder
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- rickets (soft bones caused by too little vitamin D)
- other conditions that run in families, such as polycystic kidney disease, Alport Syndrome, or heart disease



What do the kidneys do?

Your child has two kidneys. Their main job is to filter wastes and extra water from the blood. Wastes and water pass through the kidneys and leave the body as urine. The kidneys also make hormones that help the body make blood and keep the bones strong.



What is kidney disease?

Infections or other health problems can cause kidney disease. When a child has kidney disease, the kidneys may not work normally. This may lead to a harmful buildup of wastes in the body.



How can I find out if my child has kidney disease?

A urine test can be used to check for kidney disease if your child is at risk. Testing is important because early kidney disease often has no symptoms. Your child will urinate in a cup, and the sample will be tested for kidney disease.



What does the urine test look for?

The urine test checks for albumin. Albumin is a protein in your child's blood that is too big to pass through healthy kidneys. If your child's kidneys are damaged, small amounts of albumin can pass into the urine through the kidneys. In general, the more albumin there is in the urine, the more damaged the kidneys are.



What does high urine albumin mean?

A high urine albumin level may mean that your child has kidney disease. Your health care provider may do other tests for kidney disease, including a blood test, which checks how well the kidneys are filtering.



Can kidney disease be treated?

Kidney disease has many possible causes. The first step is to learn the cause of the kidney disease. Medicine and other treatments usually can't undo the damage that has been done, but they may help prevent more harm. Your provider may ask you to take your child to a nephrologist—a doctor who treats patients with kidney disease.

For more information:

About kidney disease in children

Call the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse toll free at 1-800-891-5390 or go online at www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/topics/children.asp.

About kidney disease

Call the National Kidney Disease Education Program toll free at 1-866-4 KIDNEY (1-866-454-3639) or go online at www.nkdep.nih.gov.

Participants in clinical trials can play a more active role in their own health care, gain access to new research treatments before they are widely available, and help others by contributing to medical research. For more information, visit www.clinicaltrials.gov.



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