

## Screening for kidney disease.

### Who needs it?

Most of us have heard of screening for breast cancer, or cervical smears where we check for early disease which can be treated before it becomes serious. It is now recommended that we check for signs of very early kidney disease which can then be treated to try to prevent it progressing to serious kidney disease. Initially, we will be offering kidney disease screening to those people with diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke or heart disease. If you have a history of prostate problems, kidney stones or have a close relative with serious kidney disease, you are welcome to ask us for a test.

### What does it involve?

The initial test is a blood test to measure kidney function. If kidney function is reduced at all, it will then need to be rechecked 3 months later. If the kidney function is still reduced, we would then encourage you to see your practice nurse or GP each year to organise the following checks:

1. Send off a urine sample every 12 months to check for tiny traces of protein. The most accurate test would be to hand in your first urine of the day in a white topped pot available from reception.
2. Measure your blood pressure at least once a year. Blood pressure lower than 140/85 is recommended if you have any reduced kidney function.
3. Organise a kidney blood test at least once a year which can be done at the same time as any other blood tests you may need.

If traces of protein are found in two urine samples, we would recommend a tablet which reduces the amount of protein the kidneys let into the urine, and helps to preserve kidney function.

### What is “Chronic kidney disease”?

This is the official medical term used by doctors to describe anyone with even the very mildest change to their kidney function. Patients often worry when they hear the word “chronic”, but to a doctor or nurse “chronic” means something that goes on over many years, and is often harmless.” It is perfectly normal for kidneys to filter a little less well as one gets older, so please don’t be alarmed if you see Chronic kidney disease or CKD on your notes or in a hospital letter. You are in good company with over 800 others at Littlewick!

### How can I know if my kidney disease is serious or not?

There are different stages of kidney disease and this is measured by how well your kidneys filter the blood. This gradually reduces with age, and there is plenty of spare capacity, so we do not worry at all unless the kidney function gets below 60%. The kidney function is measured by glomerular filtration rate or GFR which shows how well the kidneys filter the waste products from the blood. The GFR is approximately the same as the percentage kidney function that remains.

The different stages are as follows:

Stage 1 and 2- GFR over 60 (kidney function 60-100%) no action needed.

Stage 3- GFR 30-59 (kidney function 30-59%) normal screening tests every 6 months as above.

Stage 4-GFR 15-29 (kidney function 15-29%) we would generally advise seeing a kidney specialist for advice.

Stage 5-GFR less than 15-(kidney function less than 15%) the hospital would advise whether dialysis would be helpful.

What can I do to protect my kidneys?

Leading a healthy lifestyle helps to protect kidneys. You can ask for advice and support on stopping smoking, losing weight, cutting back on alcohol, and choosing healthy food in your diet. Taking any tablets given you for high blood pressure, and high cholesterol also helps to protect kidneys. The best tablets for protecting kidneys are ACE inhibitors where the name usually ends in “pril” or ARB tablets where the name ends in “sartan”.

How can I get more information about kidney disease screening?

You can ask your practice nurse or GP.

You can speak to Jacqui on the phone or at the surgery, as she will be co-ordinating the letters to patients about kidney tests.