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Get to know your kidneys this Kidney Health Week

South western Sydney has one of the highest rates of kidney disease in Australia so local health experts are encouraging people to 'Meet your Kidneys' in a bid to highlight the importance of the function of kidneys during Kidney Health Week (May 25 to May 31).

South Western Sydney Local Health District Director of Renal Services Dr Tim Spicer said that kidneys were the unsung heroes of our bodies.

"Unfortunately the role of the kidneys is often underrated when we think about our health, even though they play a major role in maintaining general health and wellbeing," Dr Spicer said.

"The Kidneys perform numerous functions in the body and are vital for survival.

"Most people are born with two kidneys, each one about the size of an adult fist and are located just under the rib cage or above the small of your back. They are protected from injury by a large padding of fat, your lower ribs and several muscles.

"They filter blood to remove waste and toxins, help to control blood pressure and keep it regular, manage the body's production of Vitamin D which is vital for strong bones, muscles and overall health and they also stimulate red blood cell production.

"The sad thing is that kidney-related diseases result in more Australian deaths each year than breast cancer, prostate cancer or road deaths and one in nine Australians over the age of 25 has at least one clinical sign of chronic kidney disease.

"A person can lose up to 90 per cent of their kidney function before experiencing any symptoms of kidney disease," he said.

Dr Spicer also said that like many medical conditions, prevention is key. Understanding your risk and making healthy lifestyle choices will help you remain in good health.

Tips for healthy kidneys:

- Keep your blood pressure low and maintain healthy levels of cholesterol
- Lead a healthy lifestyle and maintain healthy weight, be active for more than 30 minutes most days.
- Do not smoke
- Eat a balanced, healthy diet low in sugar, salt and saturated fats.
- Drink plenty of water and listen to your thirst
- Limit alcohol intake

For more information about kidney disease and its associated risks factors, visit www.kidney.org.au