

24 May 2016

Treat your kidneys' right this Kidney Health Week

The role of our kidneys is often underrated when we think about our health according to South Western Sydney Local Health District Director of Renal Services Dr Tim Spicer.

During Kidney Health Week (May 22 to May 28), Dr Spicer is urging people to look after their kidneys and ask their doctor for a Kidney Health Check involving a blood and urine test as well as a blood pressure test. He said early diagnosis can be a big advantage when it comes to kidney disease.

"Kidneys play a major role in maintaining general health and wellbeing," Dr Spicer said.

"Kidneys produce hormones, absorb minerals in our body, filter blood and produce urine. They are important and kidney failure can be fatal," he said.

Much is known about people who face the greatest risks of developing chronic kidney disease which Dr Spicer said can be prevented if detected in its early stages and treated to slow or halt its progression.

"South western Sydney has one of the highest rates of kidney disease and unless people at risk are tested, they are unlikely to know they have kidney disease; it produces no symptoms until it is quite advanced," he said.

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 according to Dr Tim Spicer who said kidneys were the unsung heroes of our bodies.

"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.

"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