

It is a question many of us might not be able to answer, since we do not really pay attention to the bean-shaped organs.

Due to lack of awareness and knowledge of kidney disease, many will only realise there is something wrong when they are at the end-stage of renal failure. When that happens, they have to be on dialysis, or wait for a transplant.

The theme for this year's World Kidney Day is "Kidney Disease is Common, Harmful but Treatable — Are your kidneys OK?"

Consultant nephrologist Dr Tan Chwee Choon says that kidney disease is common and harmful but it is treatable if detected early.

"Research done in the last 10 years show that early detection, change in lifestyle and frequent monitoring of blood pressure will significantly reduce the incidence of chronic kidney disease."

Early detection and treatment will slow or reduce the progression to kidney failure by between 20 and 50 per cent.

Chronic kidney disease has been categorised into five stages. In stage one and two, there are few symptoms making it difficult for those affected to realise they are suffering from kidney disease. When the disease progresses to stage five, it is approaching end-stage renal failure.

In Malaysia, every year, there is an increase of between 10 and 15 per cent of the number of kidney patients on dialysis.

"The figure might not be accurate as it could be higher. This is because some people, especially in rural areas, do not go for treatment or dialysis. We may never know how many of them suffer from chronic kidney disease."

Dr Tan, who is also president of Malaysian Society of Nephrology (MSN) and vice-chairman of National Kidney Foundation (NKF), says that in Malaysia, current statistics indicate the number of patients on dialysis is at 15,000 with 2,500 new dialysis patients annually.

"There are currently 1,700 people with kidney transplants. We do not have the figures of those at early stage of kidney disease because many do not go for screening. If they do, we will be able to detect and treat it early to prevent renal failure."

"The increasing number of people on dialysis every year

# Are your kidneys okay?

Early detection is key to preventing chronic kidney disease, writes **KASMIH MUSTAPHA.**

is a worrying trend because it shows that people are still unaware of the benefit of early detection of kidney disease and that it can be treated if caught at an early stage."

He says as kidney transplant is almost impossible in Malaysia, due to shortage of donors, patients have to be on dialysis for the rest of their lives.

Kidney disease is increasing rapidly in the developing world. With an ageing population and the increasing incidence of obesity, hypertension and diabetes, the number of patients with chronic kidney disease will continue to rise.



**The increasing number of people on dialysis every year is a worrying trend.**

— Dr Tan

Chronic kidney disease affects 10 per cent of the adult population worldwide. Failure to detect it early will result in other diseases such as cardiovascular complications and premature cardiovascular death.

It has been reported that the risk of premature death, primarily from cardiovascular disease, is on average, 100 times higher in patients with chronic kidney disease than the risk of developing end-stage renal failure.

Diabetes has been identified as major cause of chronic kidney disease. Fifty two per cent of patients with end-stage renal failure are diabetics.

Dr Tan says a simple urine and blood test will be able to determine if someone is at risk of chronic kidney disease. High

A simple urine and blood test is all it takes, says Dr Tan.

levels of protein in the urine is an indication of kidney disease.

"People who are at risk of chronic kidney disease should go for a yearly urine and blood test."

Those who are at high risk are diabetics, smokers, overweight, over 50 years old, have family history of diabetes, hypertension and kidney disease and patients with a presence of other kidney disease.

For the rest of this month, the NKF in collaboration with the Health Ministry and MSN have organised a series of activities to mark World Kidney Day on March 8.

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