

Nine WKD things you should know.

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1. WKD stands for World Kidney Day

World Kidney Day falls on March 12 every year and is celebrated in more than 100 countries, including Malaysia. This year's theme is *Amazing Kidneys - Are Yours Healthy?*

Well, are they? That's what the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF), Malaysian Society of Nephrology (MSN) and Ministry of Health (MOH) want to know.

2. What are healthy kidneys?

Healthy kidneys are kidneys that can effectively filter waste and excess water from our blood, keeping our blood toxin-free and our blood pressure regular. Each of us (usually) has two of these fist-sized organs sitting on either side of our spines in the region of our lower back.

3. What is Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)?

CKD occurs when your kidneys gradually lose their ability to function. Because this gradual progression is often unnoticeable, it can go undetected for long periods of time

A day for kidneys

and eventually lead to kidney failure.

4. What is kidney failure?

When CKD progresses to a point where kidney function is totally impaired, the kidneys are said to have failed. Patients with kidney failure are those you see hooked up to dialysis machines.

Fortunately, about 80-90% of patients with kidney failure in Malaysia have access to dialysis, though the coverage varies depending on geographic location (with very high coverage on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, slightly less on the east coast and much less in Sabah and Sarawak, which the National Kidney Foundation hopes to address.)

5. Early detection is key

About one in 10 people experience some level of kidney disease and the majority of them don't know it. The kidneys lie buried our bodies and the telltale signs - protein or blood in the urine - are fast flushed away.

6. How do you tell if you have kidney disease?

Diseased and damaged kidneys leak pro-

tein, and sometimes blood, "silently" into the urine they produce. Kidney disease screening therefore involves a simple urine test to check for the presence of protein and a blood test to check for abnormal creatinine or blood urea nitrogen levels.

You only need to be screened for kidney disease once a year and this can be done in any clinic.

7. Not everybody needs to be screened for kidney disease

Only certain high-risk target groups need to get their kidneys checked annually. You should get your kidneys checked if you:

- Have diabetes and/or hypertension or a family history of either - these are the two most common causes of kidney failure globally.
- Have an autoimmune disease like SLE (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus).
- Have a history of frequent and recurrent urinary tract infections (ie more than three infections in a year).
- Have a history of urinary stones.
- Have a family history of CKD.

● Have recovered from an acute kidney injury.

8. Is subsidised kidney screening available?

In conjunction with World Kidney Day, the NKF launched the NKF LifeCheck Mobile Health Screening Unit in January this year.

The Unit will be providing routine kidney health checks (testing urine, checking blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar levels and measuring abdominal girth) as part of the World Kidney Day Roadshow at these venues:

- The Summit, Bukit Mertajam Plaza, Penang
11.00am - 4.30pm, Sunday 8 March
 - Pusat Konvensyen Sungai Siput, Perak
8.30am - 3.00pm, Tuesday 10 March
 - Hospital Serdang, Selangor
9.00am - 3.00pm, Thursday 12 March
- The cost to the public is RM2 as the NKF will be shouldering the actual cost of RM37.
- ### 9. For more details on World Kidney Day events
- You can visit <http://www.worldkidneyday.org/pages/events.php> and www.nkf.org.my