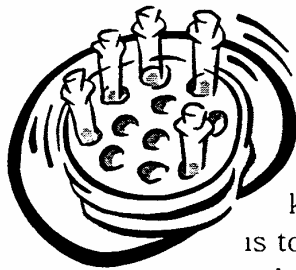




HEALTH TALK

Another Number? GFR May Be As Important to Your Health as Cholesterol



GFR is a number that is to chronic kidney disease what cholesterol is to heart disease, according to the National Kidney Foundation. GFR stands for glomerular filtration rate, and it tells your doctor a lot about how well your kidneys are working. One of the kidney's most important jobs is to filter wastes and excess fluid from your blood. These wastes become part of urine and leave your body when you urinate. When kidney function is low, wastes and fluid may build up in your blood and cause swelling, high blood pressure, nausea and poor appetite.

GFR is a measure of the effectiveness of the kidney's filtering process. Your doctor can calculate your GFR based on the results of a simple blood test. The calculation will also consider other factors such as your age, race, gender and body size. A GFR test is important for anyone who has an increased risk for developing chronic kidney disease. This includes people who:

- have diabetes
- have high blood pressure
- have a family history of kidney disease
- are 60 and over
- belong to certain ethnic groups such as African American, Hispanic American, Asian American and American Indian.

Other tests that should be done in conjunction with GFR are:

- high blood pressure measurement
- a urine test for protein, which can detect damage to the kidney's filtering units.

If you are in one of the groups with an increased risk for chronic kidney disease, ask your doctor about having tests for GFR, urine protein and high blood pressure. If your tests show that you may have kidney disease, your doctor will do additional examinations to confirm your diagnosis. Research studies show that treatment can help prevent or slow the loss of kidney function. The earlier you start treatment, the better.

GFR is also important to the development of a treatment plan for chronic kidney disease. Your GFR tells your doctor whether you have mild, moderate or severe loss of kidney function. (See table below.) Your treatment will be planned according to your stage of kidney disease. GFR is also considered the best test for monitoring chronic kidney disease. If you have chronic kidney disease, make sure to ask your doctor about your GFR result and keep track of your number. To learn more about calculating GFR, call the National Kidney Foundation or go online at www.kdoqi.org.

Stages of Chronic Kidney Disease

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>GFR</u>
At increased risk for chronic kidney disease	Risk factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure, family history, older age, ethnic group (normal kidney function and no measurable kidney damage)	Above 90
1	Kidney damage (e.g., protein in the urine) and normal kidney function	Above 90
2	Kidney damage and mild loss of kidney function	60 to 89
3	Moderate loss of kidney function	30 to 59
4	Severe loss of kidney function	15 to 29
5	Kidney failure (dialysis or kidney transplant needed)	Below 15