**Chronic kidney disease - Patient information leaflet**

**What is chronic kidney disease?**

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) means that your kidneys are diseased or damaged in some way, or are ageing. As a result, your kidneys may not work as well as they used to. A range of conditions can cause chronic kidney disease (see later).

Chronic means ongoing, persistent and long-term. It does not mean severe as some people think. You can have a mild chronic disease. Many people have mild CKD.

Chronic kidney disease used to be called chronic renal failure but chronic kidney disease is a better term, as the word failure implies that the kidneys have totally stopped working. In most cases of chronic kidney disease this is not so. In most people who have chronic kidney disease there is only a mild or moderate drop in kidney function, which usually does not cause symptoms, and the kidneys have not 'failed’.

**How is chronic kidney disease diagnosed?**

Kidney function is assessed using a combination of:

A blood test to test flow rate called the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR); and a measure of the amount of protein in the urine (proteinuria).

Increased protein in the urine and decreased flow rate are both associated with an increased risk of progressive chronic kidney disease.

**What causes chronic kidney disease?**

A number of conditions can cause permanent damage to the kidneys and/or affect the function of the kidneys and lead to chronic kidney disease. Three common causes in the UK, which probably account for about three in four cases of chronic kidney disease in adults, are:

* Diabetes. Diabetic kidney disease is a common complication of diabetes.
* High blood pressure. Untreated or poorly treated high blood pressure is a major cause of CKD. However, CKD can also cause high blood pressure, as the kidney has a role in blood pressure regulation. About nine out of ten people with CKD stages 3-5 have high blood pressure.
* Ageing kidneys. There appears to be an age-related decline in kidney function. About half of people aged 75 or more have some degree of CKD. In most of these cases, the CKD does not progress beyond the moderate stage unless other problems of the kidney, such as diabetic kidney disease, develop.

Certain medications, including non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (if they are used long-term, especially at high doses). If you are taking one of these medicines, you should have a blood test to check your kidney function at least once per year.

**What are chronic kidney disease symptoms?**

You are unlikely to feel unwell or have symptoms with mild-to-moderate chronic kidney disease - that is, stages 1 to 3. (However, there may be symptoms of an underlying condition such as kidney pain with certain kidney conditions.) Chronic kidney disease is usually diagnosed by the eGFR test before any symptoms develop.

**What can you expect at the practice?**

Once you have had initial blood and urine tests and the GP has diagnosed you with CKD you will be invited annually by letter for a clinic appointment.

You will have an appointment which will last 20 minutes with the nurse. She will do further blood tests to assess kidney function and cholesterol levels, she may also check your blood pressure if this has not already been checked. You may need changes or additions to your medication.

You will also be weighed ,you will be asked about your smoking status, general advice on healthy lifestyle choices may be given. It is an opportunity to ask any questions you may have about CKD.

**What should you do ?**

If you are on any new medication or are considering some over the counter medication please let the pharmacist know that you have CKD .