

# Make Health A Family Reunion Affair: Talk With Your Family About Kidney Health

(NAPS)—Family reunions are a great way to reconnect with loved ones, celebrate your family's heritage and make new memories. Family reunions are also an opportunity to talk about family health history.

You may have family members who have diabetes, high blood pressure or both. These are conditions that often run in families and are risk factors for kidney disease. Kidney disease affects African Americans more than other groups. That's why it's important to talk to your family about risk factors for kidney disease, how to get tested and how kidney disease can be treated.

Kidney disease is a serious and common health problem, affecting an estimated 30 million adults in the United States. Kidney disease means your kidneys are damaged and can't filter blood the way they should. Kidney disease can often get worse over time and may lead to kidney failure. If your kidneys fail, you will need dialysis or a kidney transplant to maintain your health. The sooner you know about your family history of kidney disease, the sooner you can make changes to help protect your kidneys.

To get you started talking with your family about kidney health, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), a part of the National Institutes of Health, created the *Family Reunion Health Guide*. This guide offers basic information about kidney disease and suggests approaches you can take to connect with your family about kidney health. You can use this guide to help make kidney health a family reunion affair. Information in the guide includes materials and tips to help you:

## Talk With Your Family About the Risk Factors for Kidney Disease

Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of kidney disease. You are also at risk if you have a family history of kidney failure or have heart disease. The *Family Reunion Health Guide* can help you talk with your family about kidney disease and its connection to diabetes, high blood pressure and other risk factors.



**Talking to your family about health issues can help you all live longer, better lives.**

## Encourage Family Members at Risk for Kidney Disease to Get Tested

Many people with kidney disease don't know they have the disease until their kidneys begin to fail. This is because you can have kidney disease without any symptoms. The good news is that when kidney disease is found early, there are ways to protect your kidneys by managing your blood pressure, eating a healthy diet and being active. There is no cure for kidney failure, but dialysis or a kidney transplant can help you live longer and feel better. The sooner you find out you have kidney disease, the sooner you can take steps to prevent more serious health problems. This is why it's important to talk with your family about the need to get tested.

## Make a Family Commitment to Kidney Health

You can reduce your risk for developing kidney disease by taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle. Diagnosing and treating the disease early can slow or prevent the progression of kidney disease. The *Family Reunion Health Guide* shares ideas for how you can encourage family members to take steps to protect their kidney health. By being your family's kidney health champion, you can help ensure that your family enjoys many more reunions to come.

## Learn More

For more information about kidney disease, kidney failure, diabetes, high blood pressure and more, or to access the *Family Reunion Health Guide*, visit the NIDDK website at [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov).