

Authored Article

- **Dr Rahul Patibandla, Consultant Nephrologist, Sindhu Hospitals**

Ageing Gracefully: Special Considerations and Care for Kidney Health in senior citizens

Ageing gracefully involves more than just maintaining mobility and mental sharpness; it also requires vigilant attention to vital organs like the kidneys. As we age, our kidneys undergo changes that can affect their function and overall health. Senior citizens face unique challenges and considerations when it comes to kidney care, including the management of chronic conditions, the importance of regular screenings, and the adoption of a kidney-friendly lifestyle. Understanding these special considerations can significantly enhance the quality of life for older adults, helping them navigate the complexities of ageing with greater ease and confidence.

Understanding the Significance of Kidney Health

Kidneys are not merely organs; they are lifelines, integral to our body's homeostasis. According to a recent [report](#) by Kidney 360, Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) affects more than 850 million people worldwide and will become the fifth largest cause of years of life lost by 2040. This underscores the importance of regular monitoring and proactive care for senior citizens. Given the silent nature of CKD, many elderly individuals may not be aware of their condition until it reaches advanced stages, further highlighting the need for vigilance in this age group. Health data shows that 28.3% of older people in rural areas and 36.8% in cities have

one or more illnesses. Several things can disrupt the kidney function, and many of these get worse with age. **Diabetes and high blood pressure** are the primary culprits, often leading to chronic kidney disease. These conditions damage the blood vessels in the kidneys, reducing their ability to filter blood effectively. **Obesity**, a sedentary lifestyle, and poor dietary choices further strain the kidneys, compounding the risk. Additionally, **genetic predisposition** and a history of kidney-related illnesses can heighten vulnerability.

Early symptoms and how to prevent them?

Early detection of kidney problems can make a substantial difference in the outcome, yet many symptoms often go unnoticed until the disease has progressed. Key indicators like persistent fatigue, changes in urine colour and frequency, swelling in the ankles and feet, and difficulty concentrating are prevalent. Electrolyte imbalances and hypertension, particularly when difficult to control with medication, also signal potential kidney issues. Thankfully, there are several practical steps that can help protect kidney health and prevent serious issues. Here's how elderly individuals can take proactive measures to keep their kidneys in top shape:

- **Early Detection of CKD:** Regular visits to your doctor can help catch kidney problems early. If any issues are spotted early on, they can often be prevented with simple treatments, preventing serious complications down the road.
- **Management of High Blood Pressure:** High blood pressure can put a lot of strain on your kidneys. By working with your doctor to

keep your blood pressure under control, you reduce the risk of kidney damage and other health issues.

- **Maintaining a Healthy Weight and Diet:** Eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats is good for your kidneys. Cutting back on salty and fatty foods helps reduce the risk of kidney problems. Avoiding Smoking and Alcohol is a big plus. Smoking can damage your kidneys and overall health, while drinking too much alcohol can also harm them.
- **Staying Hydrated:** Drinking enough water helps your kidneys work properly by flushing out waste and preventing kidney stones. Make sure to drink water throughout the day to keep your kidneys in good shape.
- **Moderating the Use of NSAIDs and Over-the-Counter Medications:** Overusing painkillers or other over-the-counter medications can stress your kidneys. Follow the instructions on these medications and talk to your doctor if you need to use them frequently.
- **Managing Pre-existing Conditions:** If you have conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure, managing them well is crucial. Increased educational efforts and public health campaigns have shed light on the importance of kidney care.

Despite advancements in healthcare, disparities in access persist, leaving many elderly individuals, particularly in rural areas, unaware of or unable to utilize available services. Medical institutions and healthcare providers are increasingly stressing the importance of regular screenings and preventive measures. Fortunately, a rising awareness of holistic health is encouraging more Indians to take proactive steps in managing their kidney health. This growing

consciousness is a positive development, underscoring the crucial role kidney function plays in overall well-being. As education and empowerment efforts continue, we can anticipate a future where kidney health is more universally prioritized, enabling more people to enjoy their later years with vigour and vitality.

Sources:

[NIH : - Chronic kidney disease in the elderly: evaluation and management](#)

[CKD and ESRD in the Elderly: Current Prevalence, Future Projections, and Clinical Significance](#)

[Aging in Asia: Findings From New and Emerging Data Initiatives.](#)

[CDC \(Centre for Disease Control and Prevention\): Chronic Kidney Disease Prevalence Is Higher in Older Adults](#)