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Understanding Your Kidney Health

March is National Kidney Month, making it a great time to take charge of your health to lower your chances of developing kidney disease. Your kidneys filter your blood to remove waste and extra water to create urine. They also make vital hormones that produce red blood cells, promote bone health and regulate your blood pressure. As such, the kidneys play a vital role in your body.

1 in 3 U.S. adults

are at risk for life-threatening kidney disease, but most don't even know it.



Source: National Kidney Foundation

Risk Factors

Today, 37 million Americans are affected by kidney disease—and most won't have symptoms unless their kidneys fail. There are numerous physical signs of kidney disease, but most people attribute them to other conditions. If you have one of these risk factors, you may be at risk for kidney disease:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Being overweight
- Family history of kidney disease

It's even more critical to understand your kidney health amid the pandemic. Kidney disease increases your risk of developing life-threatening complications from COVID-19.

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Kidney-friendly Tips

Your kidneys work hard for you, so it's essential to take good care of them. Consider the following tips:

- **Get tested.** Regular screening for kidney damage or disease can help you keep track of your kidney's health and help prevent future damage.
- **Reduce over-the-counter drug usage.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen) can cause kidney damage if taken regularly, so never exceed the recommended dosage.
- **Exercise regularly.** Exercising helps lower your blood pressure and boost heart health—both critical factors in preventing kidney damage. Focus on being active for at least 30 minutes a day.
- **Eat a healthy diet and monitor your weight.** Choose a low-sodium diet, avoid processed meats and focus on fresh ingredients like cauliflower, blueberries, fish and whole grains.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Water helps flush sodium and toxins from your kidneys. It's recommended that men should get about 15 ½ cups of fluids each day, and women need about 11 ½ cups.

Contact your doctor for more information about kidney health and warning signs.





Macaroni and Cheese With Broccoli

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 cups elbow macaroni (uncooked)
- 4 Tbsp. flour
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- 2 cups low-fat shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 2 cups broccoli (cooked and chopped)

Preparations

- 1) Cook the macaroni following the package instructions.
- 2) Drain the cooked macaroni and return to the pot.
- 3) While the macaroni is still warm, sprinkle in the flour and stir thoroughly.
- 4) Over medium heat, slowly stir the milk into the macaroni.
- 5) Add the cheese and black pepper.
- 6) Stir over medium heat until the milk and cheese thicken into a creamy sauce, about 7 to 10 minutes.
- 7) Stir in the broccoli. Heat thoroughly.
- 8) Taste and add a small amount of salt, if needed.

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	280
Total fat	4 g
Protein	19 g
Sodium	277 mg
Carbohydrate	40 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	5 g

Source: MyPlate

The Science of Snacking

Snacking has a bad reputation, but it can be an important part of a healthy diet. It comes down to choosing healthy snacks and watching portion sizes.

Nutrition is key to a healthy lifestyle. Snacking on healthy bites during the day offers the following benefits:

- **Healthy snacking increases energy.** It can provide midday energy boosts and fuel for exercise.
- **Healthy snacking provides nutrients.** It can meet your daily nutrient needs. The best snacks consist of nutrient-dense foods like fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and nuts.
- **Healthy snacking keeps your blood sugar levels steady.** It can keep your blood sugar levels even if you eat consistent carbs at each meal or snack. Remember that your blood sugar dips three to five hours after eating.
- **Healthy snacking prevents overeating.** It can decrease your hunger and the odds of overeating at mealtime.

Don't snack right before a meal, and only eat a snack if you are truly hungry. Try incorporating the five healthy desk snacks below into your meal plan.

5 Healthy Workday Snacks



Almonds—
1.5 ounces
or about
35 nuts



**Greek yogurt
parfait—**
1 cup yogurt
with ½ cup
berries



**Berries and
cheese—**
½ cup berries with
low-fat
string cheese



**Apple and
nut butter—**
1 apple with
1 Tbsp. nut
butter



**Veggies and
hummus—**
About 8 baby
carrots with
4 Tbsp. hummus

Preparing for Tax-filing Season

Tax season is here, so if you haven't done so already, it's time to gather all the appropriate information you need to file your 2021 tax returns. The federal tax deadline is April 18, 2022. Many people elect to file their tax returns electronically. This can be done in various ways, such as using tax preparation software or consulting a tax return professional. If you are filing with a paper form, there are certain documents you must be sure to include.

There is a myriad of tax documentation you may need, depending on your employment status over the past year. It's critical to consult with a tax professional with specific questions about your tax-filing situation.