American Heart Association®
Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic Health Initiative™

Questions to Ask at a Health Care Visit

Kidney Health & Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic Syndrome (CKM syndrome)

CKM stands for cardiovascular–kidney–metabolic

This explains how the heart, kidneys and metabolic system (how the body creates, stores and uses energy) are all connected.

Understanding the role of kidney health is important because kidneys help regulate blood pressure and fluid balance, which affect overall heart health.

When kidney health changes, the whole body can be affected. Kidney changes often happen slowly and without symptoms.

Asking clear questions can help protect kidney function early.

Before the Vist

Have recent health numbers ready (blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol & triglycerides, body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference).

- ☐ **Consider bringing someone who can support you even if they are on the phone listening in.**
- ☐ **Prepare a full medication list (including supplements, vitamins, minerals). You can ask your pharmacy to print a list for you, and then add any supplements.**
- ☐ **Write down any symptoms that are new, worse or worry you (swelling, fatigue, urine changes).**
- ☐ **List the top 2–3 main questions to ask during the visit. (see examples of questions to ask below).**

Why this matters:

Trends over time help show if the kidneys are stable or under stress.

During the Visit

Listen actively, take notes and ask questions if there's anything you don't understand.

4 questions to ask a health care professional about kidney health

Have I received my urine albumin- to-creatinine ratio (UACR) screening?
- This is a urine test that checks for albumin, a type of protein.
- It can help detect potential kidney damage.

Has my estimated glomerular filtration rate been measured (eGFR)?
- eGFR is a blood test that measures the rate the kidneys are filtering blood.
- It can help determine if the kidneys are working properly.

What signs or symptoms of kidney disease should I be aware of?

How do I take care of my kidneys and improve my kidney health?

DURING THE VISIT *continued*

Ask About Risk

"How are my kidneys affecting my heart?"

"Is high blood pressure damaging my kidneys?"

"Is high blood sugar harming my kidneys?"

Do I have signs of chronic inflammation (signs of long-term stress) that could be affecting my kidneys, heart or metabolic health?"

Why this matters:

Understanding the heart-kidney connection helps prevent long-term health complications.

Ask About Treatment

"Are my medications protecting my kidneys or should others be added?"

"Are there treatments that protect both my heart and kidneys?"

"Should I see a kidney specialist?"

Why this matters:

Some medications can slow kidney damage and lower heart risk.

After the Visit

Before leaving, confirm:

- ☐ **Date of my next lab test**
- ☐ **Date of my next follow-up visit**
- ☐ **Understanding my test results (what they mean and what to expect)**
- ☐ **Any symptoms I should be aware of and when and how to contact the care team**
- ☐ **Any new prescriptions or over-the-counter medications and how to take them**

Talk to your health care professional about your next steps. You're not in this alone.

At home: Follow your health care professional's instructions and call them if:

- Side effects or problems with medications occur
- Any new symptoms develop or worsen
- Any new prescriptions or over-the-counter medications are started
- Test results have arrived, or you need help understanding what they mean
- Additional support or help if needed for any medical concerns

Clear questions lead to clearer plans and managing kidney health can slow CKM syndrome progression, lower heart disease risk and prevent future complications.

For more information, please visit:

heart.org/myckmhealth

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