

GFR and NKF Guidelines By NKF

GFR stands for glomerular filtration rate, and it tells your doctor a lot about how well your kidneys are working. One of the kidney's most important jobs is to filter wastes and excess fluid from your blood. These wastes become part of urine and leave your body when you urinate. When kidney function is low, wastes and fluid may build up in your blood and cause swelling, high blood pressure, nausea and poor appetite.

GFR is a measure of the effectiveness of the kidney's filtering process. Your doctor can calculate your GFR based on the results of a simple blood test. The calculation will also consider other factors such as your age, race, gender and body size. A GFR test is important for anyone who has an increased risk for developing chronic kidney disease.

GFR is also important to the development of a treatment plan for chronic kidney disease. Your GFR tells your doctor whether you have mild, moderate or severe loss of kidney function. Your treatment will be planned according to your stage of kidney disease. GFR is also considered the best test for monitoring chronic kidney disease. If you have chronic kidney disease, make sure to ask your doctor about your GFR result and keep track of your number.

Stages of Kidney Disease

Stage 1: GFR is normal or slightly increased. The National Kidney Foundation recommends that you be followed by your primary doctor. It is very important to have your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar under control. Your doctor may have diet and exercise recommendations for you. One of the most important things you can do is stop smoking.

Stage 2: GFR is 60 - 80. The National Kidney Foundation recommends that your primary doctor continue to manage your cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar.

Stage 3: GFR is 30 - 59. The National Kidney Foundation recommends referral to a Nephrologist (kidney specialist) at this point for management of complications including bone disease and anemia. Recommendations also include Medical Nutrition Therapy with a dietitian to slow the progression of kidney disease. In addition to Medical Nutrition Therapy, Sun Health offers Kidney Classes for people in Stage 3 of Chronic Kidney Disease. These classes review kidney function, diet, exercise and help you manage your disease.

Stage 4: GFR is 15 - 29. At this stage the Nephrologist continues to work with you to slow the progression of kidney disease and manage any complications you may have from kidney disease. He or she will also begin to prepare you for kidney dialysis or transplant. The National Kidney Foundation also recommends referral to a surgeon for placement of dialysis access.

Sun Health offers Therapies Classes for people in Stage 4. This class reviews treatment options for kidney failure, including hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or transplant.

Stage 5: GFR less than 15. When the GFR falls below 15, it is time to start dialysis.