



## Medicines and your kidneys – is it time for a check up?

Get the best from  
your medicines



**The kidneys play a vital role in our bodies. Many medicines require good kidney function and some medicines may affect how well the kidneys work. If you take medicines, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor about your kidney function.**

### What should I do

- Talk to your doctor about your kidney function. Your doctor may suggest a blood test.
- Ask your doctor about your kidney function before starting any new medicine. This includes prescription, non-prescription, herbal and natural medicines.
- Keep an up to date list of all your medicines. If you do not have a medicines list, your doctor or pharmacist can organise one for you.

 Veterans' MATES  
[www.veteransmates.net.au](http://www.veteransmates.net.au)

**Provided by:**

University of South Australia  
Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre

**In association with:**

Discipline of General Practice, The University of Adelaide  
Discipline of Public Health, The University of Adelaide  
Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park  
NPS – Better choices, Better health  
Australian Medicines Handbook  
Drug and Therapeutics Information Service



## How do the kidneys work?

The kidneys are two bean-shaped organs, each about the size of your fist. They are located just below the rib cage, on either side of the spine.

The kidneys work as a filtering system. Blood is 'cleaned' as it passes through the kidneys. Many medicines are also filtered through the kidneys.

Healthy kidneys help the body to:

- > remove waste
- > control blood pressure
- > make red blood cells
- > keep our bones strong.

## How well the kidneys work can affect some medicines

As you get older the kidneys may not work as well and may cause some medicines to remain in the body. This can sometimes result in side effects.

Your doctor may check your kidney function before you start these medicines and may need to re-check your kidney function from time to time. If your kidneys are not working well, your doctor may lower the dose of your medicine or may suggest a different medicine. This will help you gain the most benefit from your medicines.

**Always talk to your doctor before stopping, starting or changing any of your medicines.**

## Some medicines can affect how well the kidneys work

Some medicines may cause the kidneys to not work as well. Your doctor may also check your kidney function when you take these medicines. If the medicine has affected your kidney function, your doctor may suggest a different medicine.

## How is kidney function checked?

Kidney function is checked by having a blood test.

Many people do not have symptoms when their kidneys are not working well.

Difficulty passing urine, urinary tract infections, and bladder control problems do not mean that your kidneys are not working well.

**If you take medicines, ask your doctor about your kidney function.**

## For more information:

**Talk to your doctor and pharmacist.**