Mayo Clinic Minute: What is chronic kidney disease?

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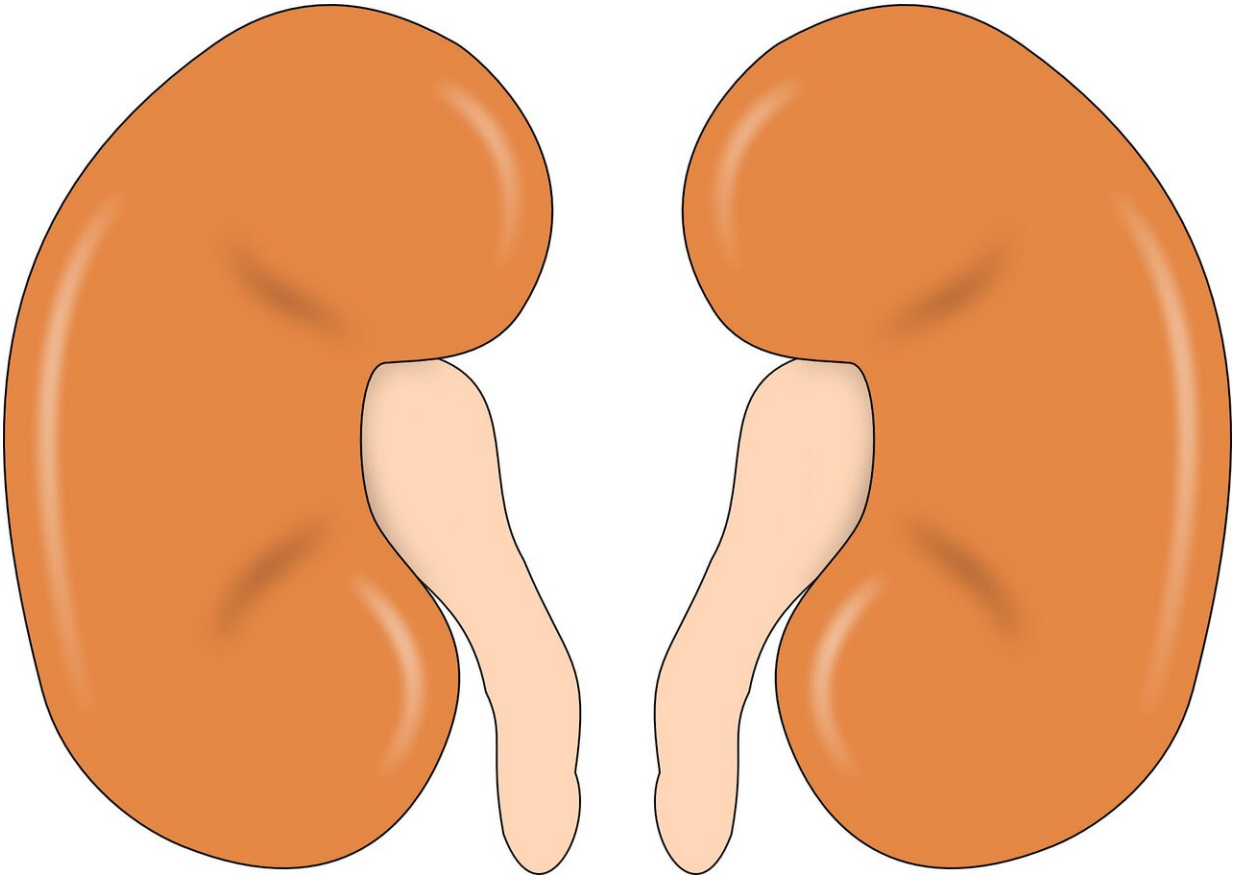

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Chronic kidney disease is the gradual loss of kidney function. Some people, including African Americans, Native Americans and Asian

Americans, are at higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease. March is National Kidney Month, and Dr. LaTonya Hickson, a Mayo Clinic nephrologist, says chronic kidney disease shows no early symptoms, so it's important to know your risks.

Your kidneys are vital organs with important jobs. They clean your blood, separate waste and remove extra fluid. But problems can arise.

"Now, when the kidneys are not functioning appropriately, you get a buildup of those waste products and extra fluid, and there are other changes that can happen, like high blood pressure," says Dr. Hickson.

High blood pressure, diabetes and family history are risk factors for chronic kidney disease.

"Chronic kidney disease is defined by a reduction in the kidney function numbers and/or an increase in the amount of protein that's lost as waste into the urine," says Dr. Hickson.

She says kidney disease can come on slowly, often showing no symptoms early on. But it can lead to kidney failure and other health problems.

"Heart disease is the most common cause of death in individuals with kidney disease," says Dr. Hickson.

Lifestyle changes can help manage kidney disease. So start walking, eat a healthy diet with less salt and don't smoke.

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