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DIALYSIS PATIENT CITIZENS

Kidney Disease in the United States

Kidney disease occurs when the kidneys are damaged and lose their ability to filter waste, excess fluids, and toxins from the blood. **Chronic kidney disease (CKD)** is a long-term condition that often progresses gradually over time and may ultimately lead to kidney failure. Common causes include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and family history of kidney disease.

Scope of the Problem

- Approximately **37 million U.S. adults (about 14% of the adult population)** have CKD.
- Nearly **9 in 10 people with CKD are unaware they have the disease**, largely because early stages often have no symptoms.
- CKD is more common among older adults, affecting about **34% of people aged 65 years and older**.
- Diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney disease in the United States.
- Up to 10% of people with CKD have an underlying Rare Kidney Disease (RKD) as the cause.

Disease Trajectory

Kidney disease typically follows a progressive course:

- **Early CKD (Stages 1-2)**: Kidney damage is present, but kidney function remains relatively preserved. Symptoms are often absent.
- **Moderate CKD (Stage 3)**: Kidney function declines, increasing the risk of complications such as anemia, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.
- **Advanced CKD (Stage 4)**: Severe loss of kidney function occurs, requiring preparation for potential kidney replacement therapy.
- **Kidney Failure (Stage 5 or End-Stage Kidney Disease)**: The kidneys can no longer adequately support the body. Patients may require dialysis or kidney transplantation to survive.

Early diagnosis and management of blood pressure, blood sugar, lifestyle factors, and targeted prescriptions—such as SGLT2 inhibitors or ACE inhibitors—can significantly slow disease progression.

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Kidney Disease As a Public Health Challenge

Kidney disease is a major public health concern because it:

- Increases the risk of **heart disease, stroke, hospitalization, and premature death**.
- Often remains undetected until advanced stages, limiting treatment options.
- Ranks as the **8th leading cause of death in the United States**. It causes premature mortality, heavily linked to heart attacks and strokes.
- Creates substantial healthcare costs related to dialysis, transplantation, and management of complications.
- Compared to white Americans, **Black Americans are over 4 times more likely** to progress to kidney failure, while Hispanic and **Native Americans are more than twice as likely**.
- Studies show people with RKD face a disproportionate risk of kidney failure.

End-Stage Kidney Disease in the U.S.

- More than 8**08,000 Americans are living with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD)**. ESKD represents the most severe form of kidney disease and requires lifelong treatment or transplantation.
- About **68% receive dialysis**, while **32% live with a functioning kidney transplant**.
- Every 24 hours, **360 Americans begin treatment for kidney failure.** Of those newly diagnosed, nearly **96% must immediately start dialysis** due to a lack of early preemptive transplants.
- More than **90,000 Americans are currently on the kidney transplant waitlist**. While roughly 27,000 transplants are performed annually, **12 people die every single day** waiting for an organ donor.

Primary Drivers and Risk Factors

Two chronic conditions are responsible for **two-thirds of all kidney failure cases** in the United States, but many patients are affected by rare diseases:

1. **Diabetes**: The leading cause, accounting for roughly **43% of new kidney failure cases**. Over 1 in 3 adults with diabetes have CKD.
2. **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)**: The second leading cause, affecting 1 in 5 adults with the condition.
3. **Genetic, Structural, Autoimmune & Inflammatory Kidney Diseases** include Alport Syndrome, Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD), Cystinosis, Nephronophthisis, Tuberous Sclerosis Complex: Atypical Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (aHUS), C3 Glomerulopathy (C3G) & IC-MPGN, IgA Nephropathy (IgAN) and Lupus Nephritis.

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Kidney Foundation (NKF). [cdc.gov], [niddk.nih.gov], [kidney.org]