



Care N' Care Salutes National Kidney Month With a Reminder to Keep Kidneys “Healthy and Strong”

March is National Kidney Month. It's a time to raise awareness about kidney disease and how to keep kidneys healthy and strong. While kidney health is essential at any age, it becomes increasingly important as people get older because, as people age, so do their kidneys. That is why Care N' Care (HMO/PPO) is reminding seniors (and others) here in North Texas to take precautions against kidney disease and to be aware of its warning signs.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, one in three Americans is at risk for kidney disease. The greatest risk factors include being over the age of 60, followed by high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney stones and a family history of kidney failure. Because kidney disease often develops slowly and with few symptoms, most of the estimated 26 million Americans who currently have the disease don't know they have it.

The kidneys are the body's chemical factories, filtering waste and performing vital functions that control things like red blood cell production and blood pressure. But over time, the kidneys can become damaged with little or no physical symptoms to warn you that your kidneys are in trouble.

One of the most commonly diagnosed kidney diseases in older adults, particularly in women over the age of 65, is urinary tract infection (UTI). UTIs may affect the lower urinary tract (the bladder and the urethra), and/or the upper urinary tract (kidneys and ureters). Symptoms of UTI can include: discolored (cloudy,

bloody), odorous, or thick urine; a burning sensation when urinating; incontinence; increased frequency and urgency in urination. Other symptoms may include pain in the lower abdomen, pelvic area, below the ribcage and above the waist felt on one or both sides of the back, fever, nausea and vomiting.

In addition to these physical symptoms, UTI can cause behavioral changes in older adults. Restlessness, hallucination, social withdrawal, agitation and confusion may all be signs of UTI and should be discussed with your physician.

Treatment of UTIs usually includes the administering of antibiotics, but proper diagnosis may also reveal other underlying causes. Due to the atypical symptoms found in older adults, it is often challenging to distinguish between a UTI, and other asymptomatic bacteria found in urine. That makes it even more important to see your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms...and to encourage those who know to do the same.

Urinary problems may be prevented by:

- Drinking more water
- Avoiding alcohol, caffeine, and other carbonated beverages
- Urinating frequently
- Practicing genital hygiene by washing with plain water, or mild soap and rinsing and drying thoroughly
- Eating more fibers