A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Stopping the Disease Spiral

World Kidney Day — March 10, 2011

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

When it comes to your health, one thing *can* lead to another. So it is with kidney disease, the ninth leading cause of death in the U.S. Diabetes is a major risk factor for developing kidney disease. In addition, people with kidney disease are more susceptible to developing and dying from heart disease.

Dr. Nilka Rios Burrows is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of preventing and controlling kidney disease. Welcome to the show, Nilka.

[Dr. Burrows] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Nilka, how common is kidney disease in the U.S.?

[Dr. Burrows] More than 10 percent, or more than 20 million U.S. adults, have chronic kidney disease, and the issue is that most of these people are not aware of their condition.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, what causes kidney disease?

[Dr. Burrows] The primary causes are diabetes and high blood pressure. And all too often, these two conditions occur together, particularly as people age. Three out of four people with diabetes report having high blood pressure. And although kidney disease can occur at any age, it happens more frequently in older age groups, among people age 60 years or older.

[Dr. Gaynes] Nilka, what are the symptoms of kidney disease?

[Dr. Burrows] Kidney disease is a silent condition, like high blood pressure. People don't know they have kidney disease because they don't have symptoms or they don't feel sick. You could have chronic kidney disease if you have diabetes or high blood pressure or a family member with kidney disease or kidney failure. That is why it's so important to talk to your doctor about getting tested. Simple blood and urine tests are used to diagnose kidney disease.

[Dr. Gaynes] How does diabetes affect the kidneys?

[Dr. Burrows] What happens is that high blood sugar and high blood pressure damage the kidney's filters and damaged kidneys do not rid the body of wastes and extra fluid. It is estimated that two of five people with diabetes have kidney disease.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is the link between kidney disease and heart disease?

[Dr. Burrows] People with kidney disease are at higher risk for heart disease. They are more likely to die from heart disease and progress to kidney failure. There are certain conditions, such as high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and high cholesterol that put people at risk for both kidney disease and heart disease. People with diabetes need to protect their kidneys and save their heart by managing these conditions.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, how is kidney disease treated?

[Dr. Burrows] In order to treat kidney disease, you need to treat the underlying causes. If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar levels under control. If you have high blood pressure, keep your blood pressure under control. There's a certain class of blood pressure medicines called ACE inhibitors that protect the kidney and slow the progression of kidney disease, in addition to lowering blood pressure. If kidney disease progresses to kidney failure, you would need dialysis or transplantation to survive. So talk to your doctor about managing these conditions to help prevent or delay kidney failure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Nilka, where can listeners get more information about kidney disease?

[Dr. Burrows] For more information, go to www.cdc.gov and type the word "kidney" into the search box.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Nilka. Today, I've been talking with CDC's Dr. Nilka Rios Burrows about the importance of preventing and controlling kidney disease.

Controlling diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol can help prevent or delay the onset of kidney and heart disease. Eating a healthy diet, exercising consistently, and getting regular checkups can go a long way in reducing the risks for these and other health conditions.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC.*

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.