

Part Two
Common problems in people aging with HIV

Chapter 10
Kidney disease

Section I. Kidney disease and its importance

10-1. Why might people aging with HIV have kidney disease?

Apart from common causes of kidney disease, people with HIV also have HIV-related risk factors for kidney disease. HIV itself can damage kidneys if not controlled. Some HIV pills can also decrease kidney function.

10-2. What happens when you have kidney disease?

Kidneys filter waste out of blood to make urine. They also control blood pressure and keep your body chemicals in balance. When the kidneys are sick, your blood pressure might be so high that it starts damaging other organs, like the heart or the brain. It can cause heart attacks or strokes, leading to decreased function or death. When waste or chemicals build up, it can cause confusion, bone problems or death.

Section II. Kidney disease: what to do with your doctor

10-3. Talk to your doctor if you have high sugar or blood pressure

People with high blood pressure or sugar should be checked for kidney disease. High blood pressure or sugar can damage your kidneys. Work with your doctor to keep them under control.

10-4. Ask if you might need to change some of your pills

Kidneys filter unwanted chemicals in your pills and put them out in your urine. As the kidneys change, you might need to change your pills to prevent toxic buildup. Bring all your pill bottles to every visit, including over-the-counter and herbal pills. Sit down with your doctor and go through them one by one, to see if you need to change any of them.

10-5. Talk to your doctor early about what to do if kidney disease gets worse

For some people, kidney disease may get worse to the point where the kidneys do not work at all. When this happens, people may want to see if some treatments are right for them, such as dialysis (using a machine to wash blood instead of your kidneys) or kidney transplant (having a surgery to put other people's kidneys into your body). These treatments have their pros and cons. Plan ahead and talk to your doctor early about your options. Bring a friend or family member you trust, so they know your wishes and can help you if your kidneys get worse.

Section III. Kidney disease: what to do on your own

10-5. Take pills correctly

Take the right amount of pills at the right time of day. If this is difficult, use a pillbox or ask someone to remind you. This is very important in kidney disease. Uncontrolled HIV, sugar, or blood pressure can damage your kidneys. Also, the right pills will keep your chemicals balanced and prevent you from feeling ill.

10-6. Eat a balanced diet

If you eat a lot of salt or protein, the kidneys must work harder to filter out the salt and the protein you ate. To protect your kidneys, eat a low salt diet with the right kind of proteins. To plan a diet that is easier on your kidneys, see a nutritionist.