

Tuesday, 7 March 2017

Healthy lifestyle for healthy kidneys

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is joining Kidney Health Australia in raising awareness about the link between Australia's obesity epidemic and chronic conditions, including kidney disease, during Kidney Health Week (5-11 March). The week is Kidney Health Australia's national awareness event which – for the first time – will also align with World Kidney Day (9 March).

Director of Renal Services, Professor Maureen Lonergan said this year's theme, *Kidney Disease and Obesity – Healthy Lifestyle for Healthy Kidneys* is about reminding people how important their kidneys are and how to minimise the risk factors that lead to kidney disease.

"Kidneys are extremely important to a person's overall health. The kidneys are a vital organ and, just like the heart, brain, or lungs, if they shut down, your body shuts down," Professor Lonergan said.

"Maintaining a healthy lifestyle will help keep your kidneys as healthy as possible as well as having a regular kidney check-up with your GP, either to prevent kidney disease or to delay the progress of the disease," she said.

The Renal Service, supported by mascot, 'Billie the *Kidney*', will host information stands at Shellharbour Hospital and Wollongong Central during Kidney Health Week to provide the community with information about their kidneys and how to take care of them.

"Last year, 19 patients from the Illawarra and Shoalhaven received kidney transplants and the LHD provided more than 20,000 haemodialysis treatments and over 3,000 home haemodialysis treatments. The Renal Service also has around 220 pre-dialysis patients, who are being provided information and education on treatment options for End Stage Renal Disease," Professor Lonergan said.

"We're always looking to learn more about the link between healthy weight and healthy kidneys, which is why members of the ISLHD Renal Service recently took part in the *HealthTrack Illawarra-Shoalhaven Healthy Lifestyle Study*, which explored ways to reduce chronic disease risk through physical activity and healthy dietary choices," she said.

An initiative of the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI), the study brought together a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in nutrition, psychology, public health, exercise physiology, medicine, social sciences and statistics to look at the most effective approach to weight loss over the long term.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

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Kidney Health Australia CEO, Mikaela Stafrace said both Kidney Health Week and World Kidney Day will tackle the magnitude of the burden of obesity and kidney disease. Currently 1.7 million Australians have indicators of chronic kidney disease, yet 90% don't know that they have the condition.

"The kidneys filter waste from the blood and keep your body clean and free of toxins, they are the most vital filtering system in your body and like any filtering system, what goes into it matters," Ms Stafrace said.

For more information on kidney disease and obesity, visit www.kidney.org.au or find Kidney Health Australia on social media.

FAST FACTS: Obesity and Chronic Kidney Disease

You can lose up to 90% of kidney function before experiencing any symptoms

- 63% (or 2 in 3) Australian adults are overweight or obese
- Overweight people increase their risk of developing kidney disease by 1.5 times
- Obese people double their risk of developing kidney disease
- One third of kidney disease cases potentially relate to being overweight or obese
- Obesity puts a strain on the kidneys as they have to work harder to get rid of toxins- over time this can damage the kidneys' filters and cause kidney disease
- Obesity also worsens other key kidney disease risk factors, such as diabetes and hypertension

Kidney Health Australia, formally the Australian Kidney Foundation, is a national health care charity with a vision 'to save and improve the lives of Australians affected by kidney disease'. As the national peak body, Kidney Health Australia promotes good kidney health through delivery of programs in education, advocacy, research and support.

Kidney Health Week Information Stalls

Wednesday, 8 March – 9am to 5pm

Wollongong Central

Lower Ground Floor (near Coles)

Thursday, 9 March – 10am to 2pm

Shellharbour Hospital

Main Entrance Foyer