

ideas & opinions

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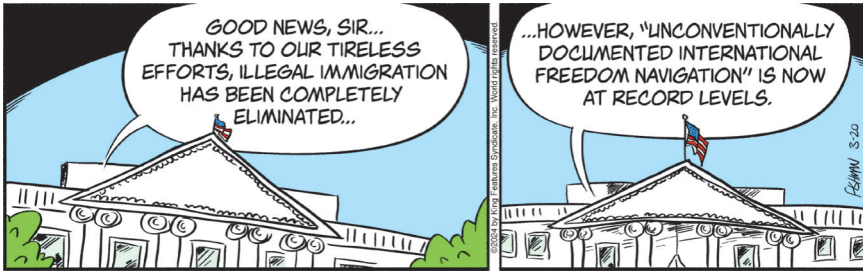
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By Loren Fishman



A VIEW FROM THE VILLAGES HEALTH

Chronic kidney disease affects millions, but with proper education and care, much can be done to prevent, delay and manage the condition. At The Villages Health, we are committed to empowering patients on their health journey.



Kristen Hubbard

COMMENTARY

The primary function of the kidneys is to remove waste products and excess fluid from the body. In fact, the kidneys filter and return about 200 quarts of fluid every 24 hours. In addition to filtering, the kidneys balance the body's fluids, release hormones that regulate blood pressure, produce an active form of vitamin D, and control the production of red blood cells. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 37 million US adults have chronic kidney disease (CKD), and most are unaware. The level of severity of kidney diseases vary, however, they are a leading cause of death

in the United States. Many people with the early stages of kidney disease do not feel ill or notice any symptoms, stressing the importance of routine medical care visits. CKD can be treated, and the earlier the better as it tends to worsen over time. There are preventative measures to take to protect the kidneys and numerous resources available to those who have kidney impairment or simply want to learn more about the disease. Keeping blood pressure well-controlled per the target set by one's doctor is highly important. Not only is hypertension a leading cause of CKD, it increases the risk of other chronic diseases. In addition to medication adherence, lifestyle factors play an essential role in blood pressure management. Most people consume too much sodium, or salt, which contributes to high blood pressure. Surprisingly, the saltshaker is not the primary source of excess sodium in the diet. Rather, according to the American Heart Association, more than 70% of the sodium people eat comes from processed and restaurant foods. Selecting

more natural foods over processed foods and choosing to prepare more meals at home are simple strategies to help control sodium intake. Blood glucose, or blood sugar, control is also important for kidney health. About 1 out of 3 adults who have diabetes also have kidney disease. Diabetic kidney disease (DKD) typically occurs slowly over the years, which is why it often goes unnoticed if routine testing is not done. High blood glucose can damage the blood vessels in the kidneys, causing their overall function to decline. Dietary quality can help with blood sugar control. Portion control, optimizing the quality of carbohydrates consumed and limiting added sugars are extremely helpful. Being overweight or obese contributes to both hypertension and diabetes. As mentioned, they are the two biggest risk factors for the development of CKD, stressing the importance of weight management. Building balanced meals and utilizing proper portion control are both essential. Consuming foods that are nutrient-dense and fiber rich, and limiting

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those that are processed and high in sugar and salt is advantageous for weight management and kidney health. Achieving regular exercise, working up to at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week, is also suggested. The Villages Health has a team of highly-trained clinicians and educators to help. Whether one has already been

diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, or they're interested in learning more about protecting their kidneys, we can assist. In addition to the primary and specialty care teams at The Villages Health, we have four registered dietitians and five members of our population health team that have been certified as kidney health coaches through the American Kidney Fund. Our well-equipped educators can help enhance knowledge on general kidney health and protection, as well as offer individualized medical nutrition therapy to those who have already been diagnosed with CKD stage 3 or higher. We will be hosting free kidney health seminars throughout The Villages Health's Learning Centers. For individuals with Medicare coverage and a verified diagnosis, individual appointments with one of our Registered Dietitians is a covered benefit. For more information, please visit thevillageshealth.com/learning-center or call 352-674-1770. Kristen Hubbard is the population health supervisor at The Villages Health.

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