

# Increase exercise, cut processed foods for better kidney health

March 30 2017, by Kristen Mitchell

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Keith Melancon, chief of the GW Transplant Institute, says people should look for symptoms of kidney disease including swelling, headaches and shortness of breath. Credit: William Atkins/ GW Today

An estimated 31 million people in the United States—10 percent of the

adult population—are living with chronic kidney disease. For many adults it will go undiagnosed, according to the American Kidney Fund.

Diabetes and uncontrolled high blood pressure are leading causes of [kidney](#) disease, which in 2015 was the ninth leading cause of death in the United States. Kidney disease is a significant issue in Washington, D.C., which had the highest prevalence of end-stage kidney disease in the United States in 2013, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

George Washington University is spreading kidney health awareness with educational campaigns and community outreach at the Ron and Joy Paul Kidney Center. Last year, GW Hospital launched the GW Transplant Institute, which provides life-saving care for the underserved local population.

For National Kidney Month GW Today spoke with Keith Melancon, chief of the GW Transplant Institute and surgery professor, about the [risk factors](#) and symptoms of kidney disease.

## **Q: Kidney disease has a high prevalence in Washington, D.C. Why is that?**

A: There is a high prevalence of kidney diseases in Washington, D.C. due to the demographics. Washington D.C. has over 50 percent of African Americans in its population, who have the highest prevalence of kidney disease. (African Americans are three times more likely to develop kidney disease compared to white people.)

## **Q: What is the Ron and Joy Paul Kidney Center doing to promote kidney disease awareness and improve community education?**

A: The Ron and Joy Paul Kidney Center continues to provide community outreach programs, media coverage, health education, free kidney screenings and a telephone line to assist with any questions people may have regarding kidney disease.

### **Q: What are the risk factors for kidney disease?**

A: Risk factors for kidney disease include hypertension, diabetes and obesity.

### **Q: What are the symptoms of kidney disease?**

A: The symptoms of [kidney disease](#) are shortness of breath, swelling, headaches and generalized malaise.

### **Q: What are lifestyle changes people can make to improve kidney health?**

A: Some lifestyle changes you can make to improve the health of kidneys are decreasing sodium intake, increasing water intake, decrease the intake of processed foods and increase exercise.

Provided by George Washington University

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