



Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)

What is acute kidney injury (AKI)?

AKI is a medical condition where the kidney functions are reduced over hours or days and which usually gets better without any long-term problems, but in some cases kidney function may not recover.

It is not the same as chronic kidney disease (CKD). It can affect other organs in your body such as your lungs, heart and brain if left untreated, or develop into severe AKI.

What are the kidneys?

Kidneys are two fist-sized organs located on both sides of your lower back.

What do the kidneys do?

- Clean your blood.
- Control the fluid levels in your body.
- Control blood pressure.
- Make red blood cells.
- Help to keep your bones strong.

AKI is mainly caused by:

- an infection
- side effects of medications
- low blood pressure
- dehydration (due to less intake of fluids, losing fluids from the body by diarrhoea or vomiting or post-surgery)
- kidney stones or tumours.

What are the symptoms of AKI?

You may not have any symptoms. It may be found after a blood test or monitoring the amount of urine that you passed over a certain number of hours. You must seek medical help urgently if you:

- pass less urine than usual
- notice a change in the colour of your urine (orange or dark)



Remember: healthy pee is 1–3;
if 4–8 you must hydrate.

- are unwell
- notice swelling or worsening of swelling in your legs.

What happens if I am diagnosed with AKI?

- A small amount of your urine will be tested.
- You will need to have a blood test.
- You may have a soft plastic tube called a catheter put into your bladder to drain it.
- You will have a scan of your kidneys called an ultrasound.
- You will see a specialist kidney doctor if required.



How will my AKI be treated?

How your condition is treated will depend on what has triggered it. AKI varies from mild to severe. The treatment will depend upon individual circumstances.

Your blood pressure will need to be checked regularly.

If you need extra fluids quickly you may need an intravenous drip – you may need to be in hospital for this treatment.

Temporary dialysis is a way of cleaning your blood by using a machine. This may be required if your kidney function is severely affected. This is normally done in an intensive care or dialysis unit.

What happens next?

Most people make a full recovery from AKI and do not need any long-term treatment.

Your doctor will check your blood pressure regularly to make sure you are doing okay.

You should check with your doctor before taking any new medicine in case it could damage your kidneys.

You must seek urgent medical advice:

- if you develop diarrhoea or vomiting **and** are unable to keep down any fluids
- if you are taking medications for diabetes, blood pressure, infection, inflammation or pain and have noticed you are passing less urine or are unwell **and** unable to drink fluids to hydrate yourself.

Where can I find more information?

- **Think Kidneys**
www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/aki/information-for-the-public
- **NHS**
www.nhs.uk/conditions/acute-kidney-injury

Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format.

Issued by:
East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust
Ipswich Hospital, Heath Road, Ipswich IP4 5PD
Colchester Hospital, Turner Road, Colchester CO4 5JL
www.esneft.nhs.uk