

What Your Kidneys Do For You

When it comes to vital organs, hearts get all the love. But kidneys are just as essential to keeping us healthy. They are our body's small, but powerful, chemical factories; working 24/7 to remove waste and keep our blood pressure in check. As a matter of fact, when kidneys stop working, so do you.

Here are the 5 top jobs healthy kidneys perform:

Remove waste from the body

Think of your kidneys as your body's filter. The kidneys perform their life-sustaining job of filtering and returning to the bloodstream about 200 quarts of blood each day. 1-2 quarts are eliminated from the body in the form of urine which contains wastes and extra fluid. This prevents buildup of wastes to keep your body healthy.

Regulate blood pressure

Healthy kidneys produce a hormone called renin to help the body control blood pressure and cause blood vessels to constrict. Kidneys can ask for higher pressure if it seems too low or try to lower pressure if it seems too high.

Control the production of red blood cells

Your kidneys make a hormone called erythropoietin. Erythropoietin tells bone marrow to make red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen from your lungs to supply all your body's needs. Red blood cells give you the energy you need for daily activities.

Produce an active form of vitamin D for healthy bones

Vitamin D comes from two sources in people: exposure to the sun's ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation, or absorption from food or vitamin pills. Kidneys convert vitamin D from supplements or the sun to the active form of vitamin D that is needed by the body.

Control pH Levels

pH is a measure of acid and base. Your kidneys maintain a healthy balance of the chemicals that control acid levels. As cells break down, they make acids. The foods you eat can either increase or lower the amount of acid in your body. Your kidneys balance the pH of your body by either removing or adjusting the right amounts of acid and buffering agents.