



# CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE: How Eastern Medicine, Nutrition and Lifestyle Changes Can Support Improved Kidney Health

By: D. Graeme Shaw, MD

From an Eastern Medicine perspective, **Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)** is often the result of abnormalities in a person's kidney and spleen energy. From a nutritional perspective, there are many healthy food recommendations that a licensed dietician can recommend for those concerned about CKD, high creatinine levels or proteinuria (excess of serum proteins in the urine) – all of which can be signs of kidney dysfunction.\* In this article, I provide the Eastern Medicine perspective, along with recommendations for good nutrition and lifestyle changes.

## Eastern Medicine and Organ Energy

Kidney and spleen energy can relate to overall kidney health and the way your kidneys function in the following ways:

**1. Kidney energy** is believed to control the kidney, heart function, fluid balance, cellular energy, cellular detoxification and elimination of toxins.

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Kidney energy is important for cellular vitality, cellular uptake of nutrients, immune defense and cellular detoxification and elimination of toxins through the kidney. Abnormal kidney energy is also implicated in changes of blood pressure and diabetes, which are two important causes of CKD.\*

**2. Spleen energy** controls nutrition, absorption, allergies, autoimmunity and detoxification. It is often negatively affected by chemicals and pollution, so it's not surprising that there is an ever increasing incidence of allergies,

autoimmune disease and nutritional deficiencies in our population. Spleen energy is also involved in Phase I liver detoxification—the initial processing of toxins by the liver. Emotions, particularly anxiety and worry, can also weaken spleen energy.\*

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When we look at kidney disease, it is most often the result of hypertension and diabetes, but can also be caused by viral infections, autoimmune disease and toxicity. The National Institute of Health states that, "Millions of Americans are at risk of developing CKD because they have diabetes, high blood pressure, or both."<sup>1</sup> Since these conditions are so prevalent in our society, it becomes even more important for those concerned with kidney dysfunctions such as kidney disease, glomerulonephritis, high creatinine, proteinuria, CKD or diabetic nephropathy to naturally support and balance kidney and spleen energies.

## Nutrition's Role in Kidney Health

We truly are what we eat. Putting better nutrients into your system can be very helpful to support your body's ability to reverse disease. The fresher and more natural the food, the more nutritional value it has. Processed and packaged food contains potentially harmful preservatives, added chemicals, and loses more nutritional value through cooking.

According to the National Institute of Health, you can prevent or delay health problems from chronic kidney disease (CKD) by eating the right foods and avoiding foods high in phosphorus, potassium, and sodium.<sup>2</sup> For my patients dealing with energy or health issues, I always recommend fresh food, especially fruits, vegetables and healthy sources of protein (chicken, turkey, small fish, tofu, etc.). However, eating too much protein can also burden the kidneys and speed up the progression of chronic kidney disease, leading to problems such as proteinuria. So moderation is important. Generally, the three worst categories I caution my patients about consuming, are foods that contain refined sugars, grains and dairy — all of which can increase inflammation, sugar imbalances and autoimmune disease.\*

## Lifestyle Affects Organ Energy

Spleen energy responds to lifestyle changes. Drinking plenty of fluids, exercising, a healthy diet and adequate sleep make a big difference, as does stress management — especially decreasing how much you worry. When you think about it logically, worrying never really resolves anything and can actually add to your stress level. Unfortunately, it's a habit that many of us have.

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As for kidney energy, there are several foods that are particularly good, such as seafood and fish. However,

considering the increasing levels of mercury, arsenic and other heavy metals in seafood, I recommend that my patients moderate their consumption of larger fish (tuna, swordfish, etc.). As for salt, I usually recommend using only natural sources of salt (like sea salt) in moderation to stimulate kidney energy. The recommended quantity of salt varies according to diet, sex, and health factors.

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The biggest factor for maintaining healthy kidney energy is to control the emotions of fear and insecurity, something we're all subjected to these days. Stress reduction techniques are beneficial in many ways. Exercise can be both relaxing and energizing. The problem with imbalances and deficiencies of energy – whether they are related to diet, lack of exercise or negative emotions – is that they result in decreased function of organs like the kidneys.

### **Enhancing Organ Energy Naturally**

Much of what we do in natural medicine attempts to improve the energy in cells and organs. There are many combinations of herbs and nutrients I use to enhance both kidney and spleen energy as well as kidney function, such as the herbs contained in Get Well Natural's Kidney Well II, Phyto Antioxidant, Cardio Well

and Metabo Well products. Other supportive nutrients for healthy function are probiotics, enzymes, antioxidants, minerals, CoEnzyme Q10, essential fatty acids, and other kidney and spleen herbal tonics.\*

In Western Medicine, we often examine and treat organ disorders without an interest or awareness of all the organs and factors that may interact with the diseased organ. For example, Western doctors rarely pay much interest to the digestive function when evaluating kidney disease.

One of the things I appreciate most about Eastern Medicine is that it is particularly good at identifying and treating the underlying cause of chronic disease. They do this by looking at a person's organ balance or imbalance, lifestyle, environment, diet, etc.

For ultimate kidney health, I implement this integrative philosophy by advising my patients to look at factors such as stress levels, exercise, diet, digestion and detoxification as a means to enhance their kidney function.\*



*D. Graeme Shaw, M.D.*

If you have any questions regarding the use of herbal dietary supplements to support your health, contact Get Well Natural at [contact@getwellnatural.com](mailto:contact@getwellnatural.com) or call 1-888-522-HERB (4372) or 408-260-9714, or visit the GWN website at [www.getwellnatural.com](http://www.getwellnatural.com) or the offices at 4010 Moorpark Avenue, Suite 119, San Jose, Calif. 95117

*\*Statements in this article have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.*

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### **Footnotes**

- 1.<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/NutritionEarlyCKD>
- 2.<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/NutritionLateCKD>, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases