

# Acute Kidney Injury

- Important information for patients who have an acute kidney injury.

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## About this booklet

This leaflet tells you about acute kidney injury, which is also known as AKI.

The leaflet will give you some facts about your kidneys and AKI.

## What are the kidneys?

- Your kidneys are small, fist-sized organs which are shaped like beans.
- They are in the middle of your back, one on each side.
- Most people have two kidneys, but some people are born with only one.



## What do your kidneys do?

### Your kidneys help to:

- Clean your blood.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Keep the right amount of fluid in your body.
- Make red blood cells.
- Control minerals in your body like potassium and phosphate.

## What is AKI?

AKI is short for acute kidney injury which means that your kidneys do not work as well as they should.

- It usually gets better without any long-term problems.
- It is not the same as chronic kidney disease (CKD) which does not get better without treatment.
- It does not mean that you have hurt your kidneys in the same way that you can hurt other parts of your body, e.g. by falling over or getting hit.

## What are the symptoms of AKI?

You may not have any symptoms. AKI may be found after a blood test or you may have symptoms that your kidneys are not working properly:

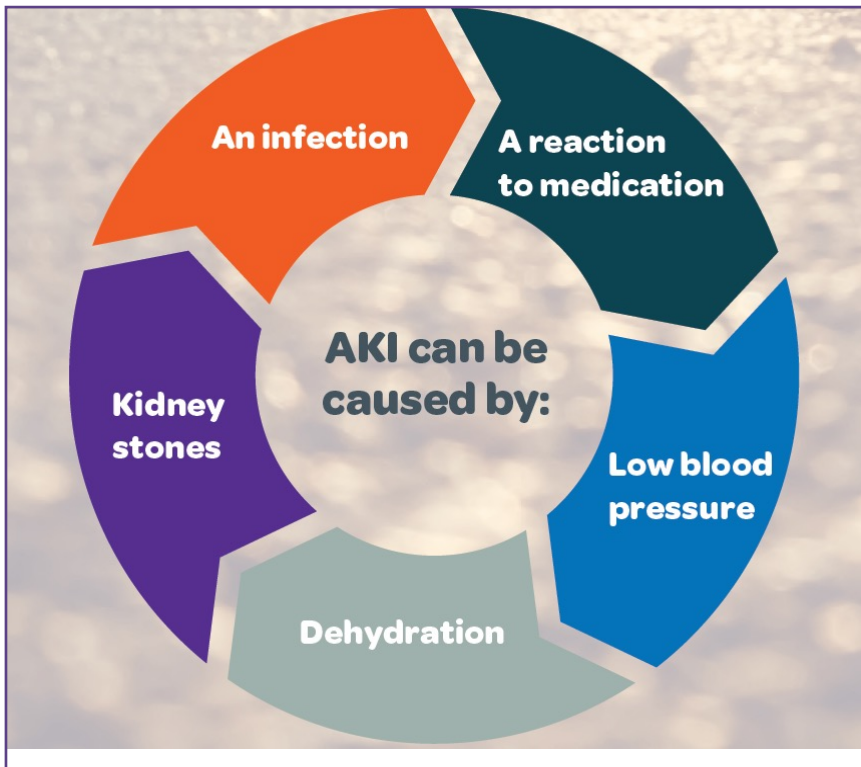
- You pass less urine.
- The colour of your urine may change.
- You feel ill.
- Your legs or feet might swell up.
- You feel very thirsty.



## What causes AKI?

AKI can be caused by:

- An infection.
- A reaction to medication.
- Low blood pressure.
- Dehydration.
- Kidney stones.



## What happens if I am diagnosed?

It is important you are treated early. You will need to have some blood tests and provide a urine sample.

You may also:

- Have an ultrasound scan of your kidneys.
- Have a soft plastic tube called a catheter put into your bladder to drain it.
- See a specialist kidney doctor.

## How will my AKI be treated?

Treatment will depend on how your AKI was caused.

AKI may get better on its own or with simple treatments like drinking more water.

If you need extra fluids quickly, you may need a drip that sends fluid directly into your body through a tube that is put into your arm with a needle.

Your blood pressure will need to be checked regularly.

If your kidneys are very damaged, your blood may need to be cleaned by a machine. This is called Haemofiltration. You may only need to be on this for a short amount of time until your kidneys recover.

## What happens next?

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

Your general practitioner (GP) may ask to see you or check your kidney function, usually within 3 months. If specific follow-up is required, your clinical team will arrange this before your discharge.

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

## Further information

The following websites provide useful information.

- [www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/aki/information-for-the-public](http://www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/aki/information-for-the-public)
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/acute-kidney-injury](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/acute-kidney-injury) – NHS Choices: AKI
- [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)



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