

Caring for Care Homes AKI special

What is Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)?

Acute kidney injury, often referred to as AKI, is a sudden and recent reduction in a person's kidney function. Acute kidney injury can be caused by a number of things such as:

- 1 Stress on the kidneys due to illness or infection
- 2 Severe dehydration
- 3 Damage to the kidney
- 4 Side effects of some drugs when a person is unwell

AKI is common, serious and harmful; however, you can take steps to prevent it by understanding what it is and what you can do to reduce the risk.

Who is at risk of AKI?

Some residents are at higher risk of getting AKI. The risk factors include:

- People with acute illness, such as sickness and diarrhoea
- People aged 75 or over
- Those with medical conditions such as heart failure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and dementia

How to spot AKI?

In the early stages there may be no real symptoms or signs; a blood test is needed to detect it. However, a resident with AKI can deteriorate quickly. When assessing residents check for the following:

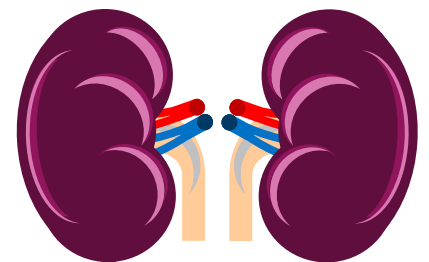
- Have they passed any dark urine?
- Do they show signs of dehydration?
- Do they have any risk factors for AKI?

If a resident is ill with sickness and/or diarrhoea they may need to temporarily suspend some of their medications. Discuss with the person in charge, they will need to contact a GP.

What can you do to help avoid AKI?

Staff working in care homes can play a vital role in the early detection, treatment and management of people who may be at risk of AKI.

Dehydration is the underlying cause of many common conditions, particularly in the elderly. Support your residents to stay hydrated by encouraging drinks and fluid-rich foods. Help the resident choose a suitable cup to make drinking easier, some may prefer a straw. Keep an eye on urine output and colour and know when and how to report changes.



Remember to encourage fluids when giving care both during the day and at night.

Symptoms of dehydration

Thirsty	Irritable	Raised heart rate	Cool hands or feet	Low blood pressure	Sunken eyes	Confused	Headache
Passing little or no urine	Passing dark urine	Remember: use a urine colour chart, this will give you an idea of whether the resident is drinking enough.					