



THE HEART-KIDNEY CONNECTION: WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

Many people think heart disease and kidney disease are completely separate conditions. But doctors now know that the heart and kidneys are closely connected and often affect each other.

As cardiologist Dr. Javed Butler explains, one of the biggest myths is believing that the heart and kidneys work independently. In reality, they are linked through the same blood vessels and risk factors.

WHY THE HEART AND KIDNEYS ARE LINKED

What harms one organ often affects the other. Common risk factors that can impact both the heart and kidneys include:

- High blood pressure

- Type 2 diabetes
- Obesity
- A family history of heart or kidney disease

Over time, these conditions can quietly damage blood vessels, the heart, and the kidneys, often without causing noticeable symptoms at first.

WHY YOU CAN'T RELY ON SYMPTOMS ALONE

Heart and kidney disease can develop silently for many years. Dr. Butler notes that many risk factors cause no symptoms early on, which means damage can occur before a person feels unwell.

Cardiologist Dr. Ian Neeland adds that many people only learn they have heart disease after a serious event, such as a heart attack. This is why early testing and prevention are so important.

A SIMPLE TEST THAT CAN REVEAL HEART AND KIDNEY RISK

One important early test is the uACR urine test, which looks for small amounts of protein in the urine. This can be an early sign that blood vessels and kidneys are under stress.

Dr. Neeland explains that while uACR measures kidney health, it also provides valuable insight into cardiovascular risk. In many cases, uACR becomes abnormal before other heart tests show changes.

An elevated uACR level is associated with a higher risk of:

- Heart disease or heart failure
- Heart attack or stroke
- Progressive kidney disease

THE GOOD NEWS

When an elevated uACR is identified early, there are effective treatments that can help protect both the heart and kidneys. These treatments may benefit people living with diabetes, high blood pressure, or early kidney disease.

WHY YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT UACR

Important tests and prevention strategies are not always discussed at every appointment. Dr. Neeland notes that starting the conversation can make a difference.

A simple question like:

“Should I get a uACR test?” can help ensure your heart and kidney health are being addressed early.

THE TAKEAWAY

A brief conversation with your healthcare provider and a simple urine test can provide valuable insight into your long-term heart and kidney health.

As Dr. Butler says, prevention is becoming one of the most powerful forms of treatment.

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