



Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Nephrologie



## PRESS RELEASE

# 'Strong Kidneys'. Europe-wide campaigns for healthy kidneys

June, 2021

**One in ten adults in Europe has reduced kidney function. It is a cruel fact that many of those affected do not notice their progressive renal insufficiency. To raise awareness of the importance of our kidneys and to show the population how they can protect their kidneys, the Council of the ERA-EDTA and Prof. Dr. Christoph Wanner, President of ERA-EDTA and Head of the Nephrology Department at Würzburg University Hospital, have launched the 'Strong Kidneys' campaign.**

Kidney disease is underestimated. It progresses slowly and 'silently', and many of those affected do not show symptoms until shortly before organ failure, when the 'point of no return' has already been passed and chronic dialysis treatment or a kidney transplant is indicated. The symptoms, furthermore, are very nonspecific at first. Who thinks immediately of kidney disease when suffering from persistent fatigue, swollen legs and eyes, muscle cramps and bone pain, itchy skin and loss of appetite?

Kidney disease is far from rare – it affects about 10% of the population – and is anything but harmless. If left untreated, patients may end up needing dialysis, and concomitant complications can sometimes cause problems much earlier than the kidneys themselves. Kidney disease is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and many sufferers do not even experience the stage of needing dialysis simply because they previously succumbed to cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks or strokes that would not have occurred at all if it had not been for the underlying kidney disease. "This makes the early detection of kidney disease so important and effective: It prevents or delays not only the need for dialysis, but also cardiovascular events. In short, it's not just kidney protection, but also vascular protection," explains Professor Christoph Wanner, President of the ERA-EDTA and initiator of the 'Strong Kidneys' campaign. Taking an early look at the kidneys also pays off for the economy in general. "The screening tests and the measurement of serum GFR and urinary albuminuria only cost a few euros, which pay off in the long term!"

However, in order to diagnose a kidney disease, people must first be made aware of it. The 'Strong Kidneys' campaign was launched by the ERA-EDTA with the aim of raising public awareness of the issue.

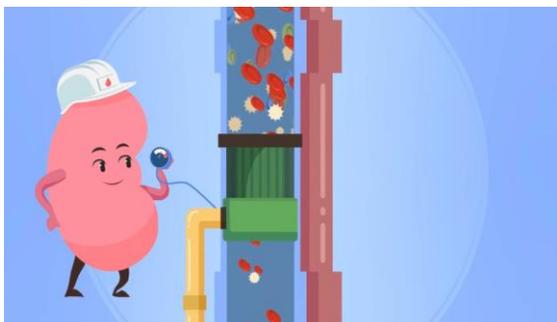
"Everyone who is at risk should be aware of how important our kidneys are and should have them checked regularly by their general practitioner to see if they are well," says Christoph Wanner. "With our 'Strong Kidneys' campaign, we want to show how fascinating and valuable our kidneys are, and how to protect the organ. Those who are at higher risk of kidney disease – for example, people with diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, who are overweight or, as a lot of evidence now suggests, those who have had COVID-19 – should definitely have their kidney function tested on a regular basis, as basically stipulated by the current DEGAM guidelines in Germany for risk patients."

The campaign is aimed not only at the early detection of kidney disease, however, but also at prevention. “Everyone can strengthen their health with a healthy diet, plenty of exercise and mindfulness, and this also benefits the kidneys. We would like to trigger a Europe-wide campaign in which the national nephrological societies play a role in informing the population in their respective countries about kidney disease and its prevention.”

A short video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meaxKgcyS98>) explains clearly what function the kidneys have and how to maintain their health: With regular exercise, healthy, low-salt food and by monitoring blood pressure and blood sugar levels. “With these simple measures, we can keep these key organs healthy a whole life long, and we hope that as many people as possible will learn about it through our campaign,” Prof. Wanner concluded.



Prof. Dr. Christoph Wanner, Head of Clinical Research and Nephrology at Würzburg University Hospital, has launched the ‘Strong Kidneys’ awareness-raising campaign as President of the ERA-EDTA, the European professional association for nephrology. © Daniel Peter



A two-and-a-half-minute video clip shows how the kidney functions, what puts it at risk and how to protect it. The animated film is produced in different languages and distributed throughout Europe.  
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JUNE 5-8, 2021