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DISEASES OF THE RENAL SYSTEM

Renal system diseases are any of the diseases or disorders that affect the human urinary system. They include benign and malignant tumours, infections and inflammations, and obstruction by calculi.

Diseases of the kidneys or bladder can compromise urinary system functions.

Common diseases of the renal system include;

1. Kidney Stones formed from Substances in Urine: The kidneys produce urine to eliminate waste. Kidney stones can form when mineral and acid salts in the urine crystallize and stick together. If the stone is small, it can pass easily through the urinary system and out of the body. A larger stone can get stuck in the urinary tract, however. A stuck kidney stone causes pain and can block the flow of urine.

2. Urinary Incontinence Is the Loss of Bladder Control: Most bladder control issues arise when the sphincter muscles of the urethra are too weak or too active. If the sphincter muscles are too weak, a cough or sneeze can cause urination. Sphincter muscles that are too active can trigger a sudden, strong urge to urinate with little urine in the bladder. These issues are diagnosed as urinary incontinence (UI). Women experience UI twice as often as men. It becomes more common with age.

3. Fluid-filled Cysts Can Develop in the Kidneys: A simple kidney cyst is a rounded pouch or a closed pocket that is usually filled with fluid. In polycystic kidney disease (PKD), clusters of cysts form inside the kidneys and take the place of the normal tissue. The affected kidneys become enlarged and work poorly. PKD is an inherited condition that often leads to kidney failure, requiring dialysis or kidney transplantation. Acquired cystic kidney disease (ACKD) typically affects people already on dialysis from chronic kidney disease. In ACKD the kidneys do not enlarge and no other symptoms occur.

4. Nephroptosis: It is a rare condition where a person's kidney drops down into the pelvis when they stand up. In some cases, nephroptosis can cause severe symptoms, including flank pain and blood in the urine. It is also known as floating kidney. Although many organs of the abdomen move down slightly when a person stands up, kidney normally remains fixed in one place with the help of surrounding tissues. It only starts moving abnormally when there is lack of tissue support.

Floating kidney is not uncommon. Both men and women can be afflicted with this condition; although it is more commonly seen in women. The right kidney tends to be more affected than the left. Treatment is necessary if the condition is symptomatic. Following are some of the common symptoms of floating kidney: pain, urine problems, nausea, vomiting, etc.

5. Chronic Kidney Disease Can Lead to Kidney Failure: In chronic kidney disease (CKD), the kidneys are damaged and unable to filter blood properly. This damage can lead to a build-up of waste substances in the body and to other problems, including kidney failure. The most common causes of CKD include diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. A diseased kidney may look smaller and have a granular surface.

6. Acute renal failure: It occurs when renal function suddenly declines to very low levels, so that little or no urine is formed, and the substances, including even water, that the kidney normally eliminates are retained in the body. There are two main mechanisms that can produce acute renal failure. When the cardiac output—the amount of blood pumped into the general circulation by the heart—is lowered by haemorrhage or by medical or surgical shock, the renal circulation is depressed to an even greater extent. This leads directly to inefficient excretion, but, more importantly still, the kidney tissue cannot withstand prolonged impairment of its blood supply and undergoes either patchy or massive necrosis (tissue death). Given time, the kidney tissue may regenerate, and it is on this hope that the treatment of acute renal failure is based. The form of acute renal failure that is due to a poor supply of blood (ischemia) has many causes, the most common and most important being multiple injuries, septicaemia (infections invading the bloodstream), abortion with abnormal or excessive bleeding from the female genital tract, internal or external haemorrhage, loss of fluid from the body as in severe diarrhoea or burns, transfusion reactions, and severe heart attacks; a special case is the transplanted kidney, which commonly goes through a phase of acute renal failure that is independent of possible rejection.

The second common mechanism of acute renal failure is toxic. Many poisons are excreted by the kidney, and in the process, like other urinary constituents, they become concentrated and thus reach levels in the tubular fluid that damage the lining cells of the tubules. Though the tubular cells die and are shed in the urine, regeneration can take place and the patient survive, if he can be maintained during the period of depressed renal function and is not killed by other effects of the poison. Poisons that can affect the kidney in this way are numerous, but the main groups are heavy metals (mercury, arsenic, uranium); organic solvents (carbon tetrachloride, propylene glycol, methanol); other organic substances (aniline, phenindione, insecticides); and antibacterial agents (sulfonamides, aminoglycosides, amphotericin), and some fungi (e.g., Amanita phalloides). In addition to the ischemic and toxic causes of acute renal failure, mention must be made of fulminating varieties of acute renal illnesses that are generally mild (e.g., acute glomerulonephritis—see below) and of the acute form of immunologic rejection that can destroy a kidney irrevocably within minutes of transplantation. Another mechanism of acute renal failure is characterized by acute obstruction of the flow of urine from the kidneys; this condition is easily treated by restoring adequate urinary drainage from at least one kidney.