

About the urinary system and kidneys

Overview

This infoKID topic is for parents and carers about children's kidney conditions.

This leaflet has the overview only.

Go to www.infoKID.org.uk to find out more about this topic or other topics

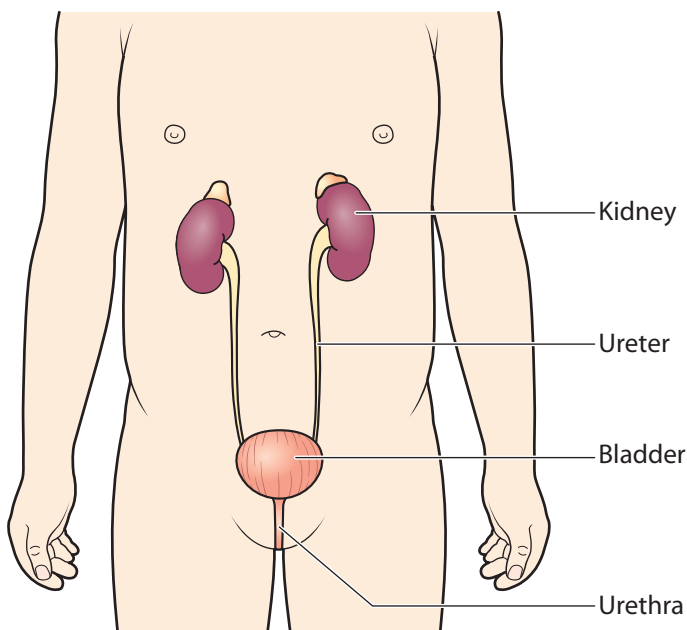
If your child has a health condition that affects his or her kidney or another part of the urinary system, you may wish to find out more about these parts of the body.

The **urinary system** has a very important job to get rid of waste from the body so that we can grow and stay healthy. It has two kidneys, two ureters, a bladder and an urethra.



Kidneys

The two kidneys remove substances our bodies no longer need. They filter blood and make urine (wee). Most of us have two kidneys. The kidneys are on either side of our spine (backbone), near the bottom edge of our ribs.



Other parts of urinary system

Ureters

The two **ureters** are long tubes. They carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder.

Bladder

The **bladder** is a round, muscular bag that sits low down in the pelvis. The bladder fills up with urine like a balloon. When full, it sends signals to the brain which 'tell' the bladder muscles to push urine out through the urethra. This is how we pass urine.

Urethra

The **urethra** is a tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside of the body. We urinate through the opening.

In boys and men, the urethra passes through the penis. It is much longer than in girls and women.

What the kidneys do

The kidneys remove waste from the body – things that we no longer need or that are harmful. They also control the amount of water in the blood, and make sure it has the right balance of chemicals, including salt and acid.

They also:

- control blood pressure
- help keep bones and teeth strong and healthy
- control the production of **red blood cells**, the living parts of the blood that carry oxygen round the body.

Medical terms

You may hear or read lots of words related to the kidneys and other parts of the urinary system.

Renal

- **Renal** means anything related to the kidney.
- A **paediatric renal unit** of a hospital is where children with kidney problems are treated.

Nephrology

- **Nephrology** is the medical specialty of kidney diseases.
- **Nephrologists** are specialist doctors who treat people with kidney problems.
- If they work especially with babies, children and young people, they are called **paediatric nephrologists**.

Urology

- **Urology** is the surgical specialty of the urinary system.
- **Urologists** are specialist surgeons who treat people with problems in their urinary system.
- If they work especially with babies, children and young people, they are called **paediatric urologists**.

Urologists and nephrologists often work together.

Other doctors

- Other doctors, including **general practitioners** (GPs – family doctors), and **general paediatricians** (children's doctors), will be able to treat some kidney conditions in children.

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