



On average, people living with mental health conditions **die 11 years earlier than the rest of the population.**

Two-thirds of these deaths are **preventable**¹ by accessing freely available services.

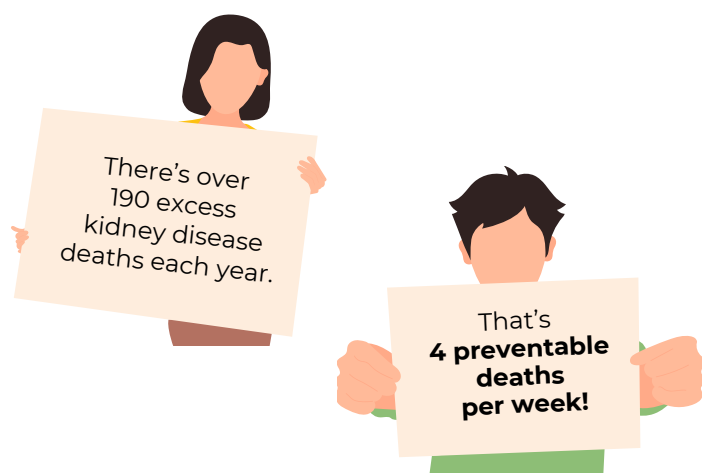
We can change this!

The health inequity

People with mental health conditions are more than **six times as likely** to die prematurely from kidney diseases.¹

For people with mental health conditions, kidney diseases cause:

- over 270 premature deaths^a a per year¹
- over 190 (4 per week) of these deaths are potentially preventable.¹



People with severe mental illness are only half as likely to be placed on a kidney transplant waitlist, indicating disparities in access to treatments.²

Screening saves lives^b

Routine blood tests can detect kidney function problems, and a urine test can check for early signs of kidney damage, helping to identify problems early.

Screening for kidney disease is important, because kidneys can lose up to 90% of functioning without symptoms.

One in seven Australians have signs of kidney disease,⁴ and more than half (~2.5 million people) are unaware of their risk because they have no symptoms.

Undiagnosed kidney disease can lead to kidney failure if not diagnosed and treated.

Diabetes, high blood pressure, older age, and medications such as lithium increase kidney-related risk factors and the need for routine testing.



Access to quality physical health care is a basic human right!

Keep asking until you and the people you support get the care they deserve.

This factsheet is part of a series on specific health risks for people living with mental health conditions. It draws on Equally Well's national monitoring report¹, and other relevant research.

Every day in Australia, **46 people** with mental health conditions **die of preventable** physical health conditions.¹

We can all help to improve health and save lives of people living with mental health conditions.



Looking after yourself

- **Ask** your GP for a kidney function test – both urine and blood tests.⁵
- **Check** your risk factors using the Kidney Health Australia '[Kidney Risk Test](#)'.⁶
- **Explore** opportunities to be 'kidney-healthy' through physical activity, healthy eating, reducing alcohol and smoking, and managing blood pressure.⁷
- **Access** peer support or support groups for people with kidney diseases.⁸
- **Equip** yourself with the [Taking Charge of your Care](#) resource to plan the physical health care you want.



Helping others

- **Seek** advice about kidney health and diagnosis implications using the [Kidney Helpline](#).⁹
- **Advise** about kidney health, including managing other health conditions such as diabetes, and screening options available.
- **Assist** by supporting them to arrange and attend GP appointments.
- **Share** this factsheet in places such as your workplace, health services, libraries, community spaces and with friends and colleagues.



Workplace & network

- **Raise** staff awareness of elevated kidney disease risk in people with mental health conditions.
- **Encourage** proactive screening, follow-up treatment, and support.
- **Implement** tailored kidney health programs for this population.
- **Use** the [CKD-Go! app](#) for resources and action plans.¹⁰
- **Access** resources via the [Kidney Health Professional Hub](#).¹¹
- **Seek** to coordinate mental and general healthcare.

Further information

Equally Well's national monitoring report¹ examined the premature mortality and preventable deaths for people living with mental health conditions, defined as the number of deaths in a section of the population above that expected based on the total population death rates (as defined by OECD¹²).

About urinary diseases

Chronic kidney disease and acute kidney injury are the main contributors to mortality from diseases of the urinary system as reported in Equally Well's national monitoring report.¹ Other urinary conditions, such as urinary tract infections, kidney stones, urinary retention, and hydronephrosis can lead to serious complications such as infection and kidney failure if left untreated. More information is available from [Kidney Health Australia](#).

About Equally Well

Equally Well is a collective of over 100 organisations committed to the physical health of people living with mental health conditions. The Equally Well initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Links *[click or scan]*



[Unequally Unwell
Summary Report](#)



[Full Report](#)



[Equally Well](#)

^a Premature is defined as between the age of 15 to 74 years.

^b Please note, this information is not a substitute for professional medical advice.



Factsheet #12

Kidney diseases and mental health

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3. Sara G, Chen W, Large M, et al. Potentially preventable hospitalisations for physical health conditions in community mental health service users: a population-wide linkage study. *Epidemiol Psychiatr Sci.* 2021;30:e22.
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