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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### Kidney disease: Do you know your risk?

*Vancouver, BC* – In British Columbia it's estimated that one in thirty people has kidney disease – and most of them don't even know it.

That's understandable because the symptoms of early-stage kidney disease are easily missed. However, some of these people won't discover their disease until their kidneys actually begin to fail. At that point their only options for survival are dialysis or a kidney transplant.

The annual mortality rate for people on dialysis is 10 per cent, and the five-year survival rate is worse than for all cancers except lung cancer. But if kidney disease is detected early enough, with proper treatment many people can postpone the need for dialysis for years, and sometimes even avoid it altogether.

Risk factors for developing the disease include:

- Having diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease
- Having a family history of kidney disease
- Belonging to specific high-risk ethnic groups (First Nations, Pacific Islanders, Asians and of African descent).

"Learning about the risk factors can play an important role in the early detection and prevention of kidney disease," says Health Services Minister George Abbott. "Fortunately, patients in British Columbia have access to a broad range of kidney care services no matter where they live and we are making significant strides in early detection and treatment, as well as increasing dialysis options."

"It's important for people to understand their risk for developing kidney disease," says Dr. Adeera Levin, executive director of the BC Provincial Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. "For anyone with the disease, the earlier it can be detected the better their chance for continuing to live a normal life."

March 12 is World Kidney Day, an internationally observed occasion dedicated to increasing awareness of the urgent global need for the early detection and prevention of kidney disease.

As well, March is National Kidney Month and the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch will be conducting its annual March Drive fundraising initiative.

"This year we're expecting up to 8,000 volunteers to be involved in the campaign, knocking on doors across the province to raise money and promote better understanding of kidney health," says Lorraine Gerard, executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch.

The BC Renal Agency encourages British Columbians to learn more about their risk for developing kidney disease and offers a simple online quiz on its website, at [www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca).

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## **Backgrounder**

### ***Are Your Kidneys OK?***

Test your knowledge of kidney disease by filling out the quiz posted throughout Kidney Month at [www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca). At the end of March, random draws will be made and prizes awarded.

### ***What are some of the symptoms to look for?***

In the early stages of kidney disease, many individuals experience no symptoms. However, common early symptoms of kidney disease include: foamy or bloody urine; a frequent need to urinate at night; headaches; and puffy eyes or ankles.

### ***Why is there a Kidney Month?***

While patients with kidney disease in British Columbia have some of the best outcomes in the country and a broad range of care options, early diagnosis and treatment are essential to achieve the best patient outcomes, as changes to diet or medication can slow or even stop the progress of kidney disease.

### ***During the March Drive...***

More than 8,000 Kidney Foundation volunteers will canvass homes across BC to raise awareness and funds for research and patient programs.

### ***Where can I find out more about World Kidney Day?***

[www.worldkidneyday.org](http://www.worldkidneyday.org)

### ***Where can I learn more about kidney disease?***

[www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)  
[www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)

The BC Renal Agency ([www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)) and the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch ([www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)) are good sources of information for patients and their families. The BC Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, has an informative DVD (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi and Tagalog versions) featuring patients who tell their stories about living and dealing positively with kidney disease. The DVD can be ordered through the agency's online order form. It can also be viewed online (English only).