



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2010HSERV0011-000221
March 5, 2010

Ministry of Health Services
BC Renal Agency
Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch

B.C. CELEBRATES KIDNEY MONTH, PROMOTES AWARENESS

VICTORIA – March is National Kidney Health Month in Canada and a perfect opportunity for British Columbians to learn more about the risks of kidney disease and the benefits of early diagnosis.

Approximately one in thirty British Columbians has some level of kidney disease, and many of these individuals are not aware that they suffer from kidney disease because there are no early symptoms.

“By increasing awareness of the risk factors for kidney disease, we hope more British Columbians will take action to protect their health,” said Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “Healthy lifestyle choices play an important role in kidney health and if kidney disease is identified early, it can often be managed through diet, medication and lifestyle adjustments, which can postpone and sometimes even prevent the need for dialysis.”

People living with kidney disease often do not know they are affected until their kidneys actually begin to fail. At that point their only treatment options are dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Early diagnosis and treatment for kidney disease can significantly delay and even prevent kidney failure and the need for dialysis. Reducing the chances of developing kidney disease starts with understanding the risk factors. These include:

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

“Early detection of kidney disease is essential to optimizing health outcomes for patients,” said clinical nephrologist Dr. Adeera Levin, executive director of the BC Provincial Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. “With proper treatment, many patients with early stage kidney disease can manage their condition without ever needing dialysis.”

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

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“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 Gerrard, executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch.

March 11 is World Kidney Day 2010, an internationally observed day dedicated to increasing awareness of kidney disease and promoting the benefits of early diagnosis.

For more information on kidney disease, please visit www.bcrenalagency.ca or www.kidney.bc.ca.

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A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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KIDNEY HEALTH

Are Your Kidneys OK?

Test your knowledge of kidney disease by filling out the quiz posted throughout Kidney Month at 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 B.C. to raise awareness and funds for research and patient programs.

Where can I find out more about World Kidney Day?

www.worldkidneyday.org

Where can I learn more about kidney disease?

www.bcrenalagency.ca and www.kidney.bc.ca

The BC Renal Agency (www.bcrenalagency.ca) and the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch (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).

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