

TINA TURNER REMEMBERED FOR HER LONG ADVOCACY OF KIDNEY HEALTH

Kidney disease has been brought into sharp focus during Kidney Health Week with the death of the queen of rock music, Tina Turner.

Kidney Health Australia said Turner was one of the greatest advocates for Kidney Health, having lived with kidney disease for more than a decade.

“We are saddened to hear of Tina’s passing. Not only was she one of the greatest performers of all time, she was also instrumental in raising awareness for kidney health worldwide,” CEO of Kidney Health Australia, **Chris Forbes**, said today.

“We owe Tina Turner a great debt. She was a wonderful crusader for the cause, urging people to get their kidneys checked. She was also the face of an international campaign for kidney disease earlier this year.”

In one of her most recent statements on her social channels, Turner bravely shared her battle with kidney disease and recounted how high pressure led to her kidney issues. She urged people to “show your kidney some love”.

The global superstar had suffered from high blood pressure since 1978, and after a stroke in 2009 discovered she had lost 35 per cent kidney function.

Tina went onto dialysis for nine months before receiving a kidney transplant in 2017 when her husband Erwin Bach donated one of his kidneys.

Kidney Health Australia have taken up the challenge to raise awareness and promote kidney health across Australia, and is advocating for increased investment in initiatives that will drive earlier detection of the disease.

This Kidney Health Week, Kidney Health Australia is urging adults to take a simple two-minute online test to determine if they are at risk of developing kidney disease.

Of the 2 million – or around one in 10 – Australian adults affected by kidney disease, 1.8 million are completely unaware of it, most likely due to the lack of symptoms. However, an easy online test could be the reality check they need.

The online test developed by Kidney Health Australia can be taken anywhere, any time, and includes nine questions that help to identify your risk of kidney disease. The test will determine whether a follow-up appointment with your GP for a Kidney Health Check is recommended – a simple check that could save your life.

Three in four Australians are at risk of kidney disease, with the highest contributing factors being diabetes and high blood pressure.

Mr Forbes said chronic kidney disease is an under-diagnosed condition. By the time people notice any symptoms, up to 90 per cent of kidney function is often lost, making it too late to stop or even slow down the disease.

“With three out of four Australians currently at risk, investment in early detection is vital to saving lives, while also reducing the economic burden on the health system and society as a whole.

“We want to make sure everyone has knowledge and awareness of early detection, which could save their life. We encourage everyone to take the two-minute test on the Kidney Health Australia website. It’s a simple way to determine your risk of kidney disease and take the appropriate steps to avoid a life, or quality of it, being cut short.”

Kidney disease has no symptoms and 90 per cent of kidney function can be lost without warning, meaning diagnosis is often too late and little can be done at that late stage to avoid kidney failure. However, early detection can slow or even stop the progression of this insidious, incurable and deadly disease.

Professor Karen Dwyer, Nephrologist and Clinical Director at Kidney Health Australia, said: “Tina Turner should be applauded for her willingness to share her medical history to publicise the importance of looking after your kidneys.

“Her openness with her longstanding illness is a reminder for us all to keep an eye on our blood pressure, and to control it, if we are to avoid complications.

“Controlling your blood pressure is so important. There’s a bi-directional relationship between blood pressure and kidney disease. That means high blood pressure increases the risk for kidney disease, and once you have kidney disease it further promotes high blood pressure. It’s a vicious cycle.

“Uncontrolled blood pressure exerts a lot of pressure on the kidney.”

Professor Dwyer said for the first time in 20 years there are new treatments for kidney disease that can slow down the progression to kidney failure.

“Early detection has never been more important – we have a unique opportunity to change the future for so many Australians. The best thing you can do this Kidney Health Week is find out if you are one of the three in four Aussies at risk of kidney disease, and if so get a Kidney Health Check with your GP.”

Symptoms can be vague – like poor concentration or feeling tired. Often people just put it down to winter, being busy or getting older.

“We recommend screening for kidney disease every year or two if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, excess abdominal weight, a history of smoking, acute kidney injury or a family history of kidney disease,” Professor Dwyer said.

Kidney Health Australia is encouraging all Australians to take the two-minute online risk test. For more information visit www.kidney.org.au/atrisk.

KEY STATS

- Chronic kidney disease affects more than 2 million Australians – that’s almost one in every 10. This increases to 1 in 5 for First Nations Australians.

- 1.8 million Australians are unaware they have kidney disease.
- 3 in 4 Australians are at risk of kidney disease.
- Around 66 Australians die per day with chronic kidney disease (more than breast and prostate cancer and road accidents).
- High Blood pressure is the underlying cause in 12% of all kidney failure cases.
- Chronic kidney disease contributes to 1 in 6 hospitalisations in Australia.
- Chronic kidney disease is an underlying cause in 11 per cent of all deaths in Australia.
- The number of Australians receiving either dialysis or a kidney transplant has more than doubled between 2000 and 2020 from 11,700 to 27,702.
- Chronic kidney disease cost Australia \$9.9 billion each year, including \$2.3 billion to our healthcare system – an unnecessary cost if we diagnose kidney disease earlier.
- For every dollar invested in targeted early detection of chronic kidney disease, \$45 in costs are saved in the health system.
- If detected early, deterioration in kidney function can be reduced by up to 50 per cent.
- Targeted detection of kidney disease is via a Kidney Health Check through a GP that includes a blood pressure check, a blood test for kidney function and a urine test to look for any leakage of protein.
- New treatments can slow the progression of chronic kidney disease by up to 15 years.

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Kidney Health Australia is the recognised voice for kidney disease in Australia, striving to create a healthier community through increased awareness and early detection of kidney disease. KHA connects kidney consumers to vital resources and services to help them manage their condition and achieve a better quality of life. They work with health professionals and researchers to develop better treatments so that one day, every Australian will have healthy kidneys.

To find out more visit www.kidney.org.au/kidneyhealthweek

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