



American Heart Association®

Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic
Health Initiative™

Talking With a Health Care Professional About CKM Syndrome

(Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic Syndrome)

Use the 3 Cs: Connect. Check. Customize.

Cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic health (CKM health) explains how the heart, kidneys and metabolic system (how the body creates, stores and uses energy) are linked.

These systems affect each other. Changes in one can place stress on the others.

Over time, poor CKM health can lead to CKM syndrome, which often develops slowly and may not cause symptoms at first.

Why These Conversations Matter:

Starting the conversation early can:

- Prevent organ damage;
 - Heart
 - Blood vessels
 - Kidneys
 - Pancreas
 - Liver
 - Fat tissue
- Protect kidney function

- Improve metabolic health (how the body creates, stores and uses energy)
- Reduce emergency events (such as heart attack, stroke or kidney failure)
- Slow progression of CKM syndrome (meaning early risk factors build up and start affecting the heart, kidneys and metabolism together, rather than staying separate or mild.)
- Improve long-term health

THE 3 CS CAN HELP GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

CONNECT



Connect Systems and Conditions

Many people think of health problems as separate:

*"I just have high blood pressure."
"My blood sugar is only a little high."
"My kidneys are OK."*

CKM health means these conditions are connected.

How to start the conversation

Questions to ask:

*"How are my heart, kidneys and blood sugar connected?"
"Are these conditions affecting each other?"
"Is there a bigger picture I should understand?"*

Why this matters:

Understanding the connection makes prevention and treatment plans clearer.

It shifts care from treating one problem at a time to taking care of the whole body.

CHECK



Check your Risk and Current Stage

CKM syndrome happens in stages.

Early stages may not cause symptoms, and you may feel fine.

Later stages may include more serious health conditions and organ damage.

Important numbers may include:

- Blood pressure
- Lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides)
- A1C (average blood sugar control)
- Estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR)
- Urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (UACR)
- Body mass index (BMI - weight in relation to your height) and waist size

Questions to ask

"What stage of CKM syndrome am I in?"

"Are my numbers stable, improving or getting worse?"

"What should my goal numbers be?"

"What does this mean for my future health?"

"How do I manage my CKM health?"

Why this matters:

Clear information makes risk easier to understand.

When numbers are tracked over time, you become aware if changes in your care are needed.

Early changes can prevent later complications.

CUSTOMIZE



Customize a Care Plan with your Health Care Professional Team

CKM syndrome is treatable and sometimes even reversible.

Lifestyle changes, medications and team-based care can slow or even improve risk.

The best plan matches:

- What is most important to you and your health care professional in your current health
- Main risk factors
- Personal goals
- Daily routines and habits
- Financial or health access
- Builds changes in your health based on the things you like to do

Questions to guide planning

"What change would make the biggest difference right now?"

"What should I do first?"

"Which options are available?"

"Are there medications that protect more than one system?"



Why this matters:

Plans work best when they fit real life.

Shared decision-making increases follow-through and confidence.

Making the Most of Appointments

Before the visit:

- Write down questions
- Bring medication list
- Gather recent blood work results or at-home monitor readings
- Bring someone with you, or call them if it is helpful to have another set of ears

During the visit:

- Ask questions and request explanations, writing down responses to review later
- Request clarification if something is unclear
- Review goals together

After the visit, you should understand the following:

- Next steps
- A follow-up plan
- Which numbers to track and how to track them

20-Second Conversation Starter

To Connect:

"How are my heart, kidneys and metabolic health affecting each other?"

To Check:

"What stage of CKM syndrome am I in, and what do my numbers mean?"

To Customize:

"What change would make the biggest difference right now?"

CKM health is not about just one piece of your health. It is about how systems work together.
Clear conversations help make prevention possible.



**CONNECT
THE SYSTEMS**



**CHECK YOUR
NUMBERS**



**CUSTOMIZE
A PLAN**

These steps make CKM care understandable and actionable.

heart.org/myckmhealth

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