

Kidney Function Testing FAQs



Your provider has ordered a test to determine if your kidneys are working properly. Chronic kidney disease is a serious but treatable condition. The kidneys keep you healthy by filtering wastes from your blood. If kidney disease worsens, wastes build up in the blood. This can lead to high blood pressure, low blood count (anemia), weak bones and other complications. It can also increase your risk of heart disease or blood vessel disease.

Black and African American people have a higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease. This risk is especially higher among older adults. Early detection can help prevent kidney disease from progressing to kidney failure. The primary method of early detection is measuring kidney function.

How is kidney function measured?

Kidney function is typically measured using blood and urine tests. From the blood test results, your doctor calculates the “estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate” or eGFR. The eGFR is an important method used to diagnose and track kidney disease.

How is the eGFR changing?

In the past the eGFR calculation took the person’s race into account. We now know that this is not a valid method. It often overestimated kidney function among Black and African American patients. This often led to delays in diagnosis and treatment such as referral to specialists and kidney transplants. Delayed care means patients are more likely to suffer serious damage to their health than if their disease was detected earlier.

Ochsner has adopted a new eGFR calculation that does not include race. This new equation has been adopted by the National Kidney Foundation, the American Society of Nephrologists, and many of the nation’s leading health systems.

Why is this important?

By removing race from the eGFR, Ochsner providers will be able to detect and treat CKD earlier. This will mean faster and more comprehensive care for more patients.

Why did Ochsner adopt the new eGFR?

Ochsner recognizes that inequities in care directly contribute to poor health. This is true for individual patients and for whole communities. As the state’s largest academic health system, Ochsner can be a catalyst for change. Adopting the new eGFR is one of the ways Ochsner is helping combat the differences in access to quality care that many people across Louisiana and Mississippi experience.



Your next kidney function test results may look different.

What does the new eGFR mean for you?

More patients, particularly Black and African American patients, will now appear to have lower eGFRs than they may have seen before. This is a positive change. It means more patients might be eligible for care sooner, such as transplants.

What should you do if your eGFR results look different?

Talk to your primary care provider or specialist about your results. Your physician or provider can answer questions and refer you to any additional care you may need.

+ **Find more information about kidney disease and the new eGFR** at www.kidney.org/content/AtoZ/about-chronic-kidney-disease.



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