

## Kidney problems in children

Some problems children have with their kidneys can be treated, while others can have more long-term effects. Kidney problems in children can be caused by:

- birth defects (congenital defects, or problems that happen while a baby is developing in the mother's womb)
- infections
- hereditary diseases (diseases that are passed from parents to their children)
- kidney diseases, such as minimal change disease or focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, which can affect how well the kidneys work. The symptoms of these diseases can cause nephrotic syndrome, which happens when the kidneys leak protein
- diseases that affect the whole body, such as lupus and diabetes.

### Does my child have a kidney problem?

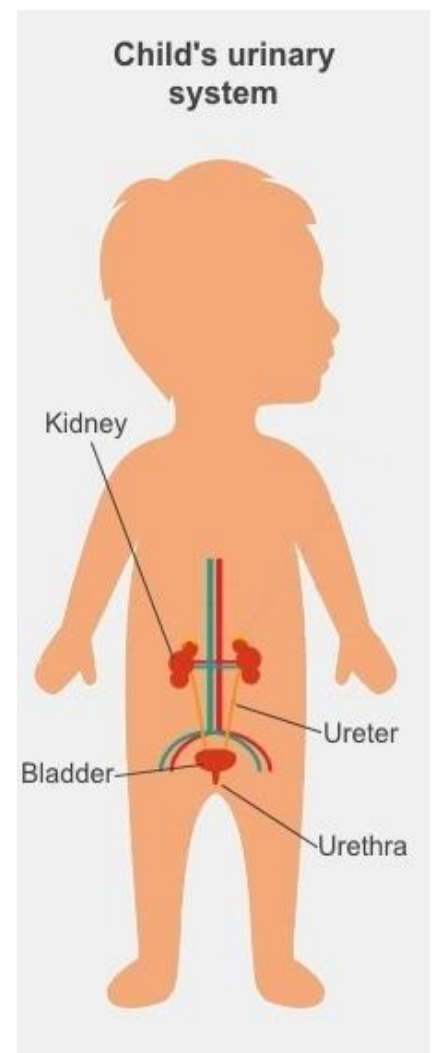
Many children have no symptoms, or very few symptoms, of a kidney problem. Symptoms they may have include:

- changes in how often they have to pass urine (wee). These can include weeing more or less often, not being able to control the urge to wee, getting up at night to wee, or pain when they wee
- bed wetting
- not wanting to eat much (a poor appetite)
- swollen hands and feet
- tiredness or difficulty concentrating at school and home.

Make an appointment to see your GP if your child has any of these symptoms.

Your doctor may use several tests to see if your child does have a problem with their kidneys. These tests might include:

- urine tests, to check for infection or protein in their urine
- blood tests, to check for signs of infection and how well their kidneys are working. These will include a test for creatinine, which is a waste product your kidneys usually filter out of your blood. If your child has more creatinine in their blood, it means their kidneys are not filtering it out very well. This is a good way to show how well their kidneys are working





- a kidney ultrasound, which is a scan that shows the size, shape, and structure of their kidneys
- a kidney (renal) biopsy, which means taking a sample of their kidney to find the cause of the problem, and see how much damage there is
- nuclear scans such as a DMSA, which can take pictures of the kidneys
- Micturating cysto-urethrogram (MCU) a test to see if there are any problems with your child's urethra (the tube they urinate, or wee, through).

### What treatment will my child have?

The treatment will depend on what is causing your child's kidney problems. If they have an infection, they will be given antibiotics to treat the infection. If they have a birth defect, it may be possible to fix the defect with surgery. If their kidneys are damaged, treatment will aim to control the symptoms and stop or slow down any further damage.

**i** *Local health professionals recommend the following pages.*

- Kidney Health New Zealand ([www.kidneys.co.nz/Kidney-Disease/Kidney-Disease](http://www.kidneys.co.nz/Kidney-Disease/Kidney-Disease))  
This New Zealand website has good information about kidney disease, kidney donation and transplant, and patient support.
- Kidney Kids NZ ([kidneykids.org.nz](http://kidneykids.org.nz))  
Kidney Kids NZ has been set up by parents to meet the needs of children, and the families of children, who have kidney disorders.

*Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Endorsed by clinical director, Child Health, Canterbury DHB. August 2016.*