



NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH

For many of us, the kidneys are an organ we don't think about until something goes wrong. But this vital organ is responsible for ridding the body of waste products and maintaining fluid balance (among other important functions). In fact, if you're healthy, your kidneys can filter up to 180 gallons of liquid a day!

That's why it's so important to take care of your kidneys—and adopt healthy habits now to prevent complications in the future. If you want to protect yourself from kidney disease and enjoy better overall health, check out these tips from the National Kidney Foundation:

Who Is Most at Risk for Kidney Disease?

- Anyone with high blood pressure or diabetes
- Anyone with a family history of kidney failure
- African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders and American Indians
- Those aged 60 and older
- Those who are overweight or obese

Symptoms of Kidney Disease

Most people may not have any severe symptoms until their kidney disease is advanced. However, you may notice that you:

- Feel more tired and have less energy
- Have trouble concentrating
- Have a poor appetite
- Have trouble sleeping
- Have muscle cramping at night
- Have swollen feet and ankles
- Have puffiness around your eyes, especially in the morning
- Have dry, itchy skin
- Need to urinate more often, especially at night

What to Do to Reduce Your Risk for Kidney Disease?

- Exercise regularly.
- Control your weight.
- Stay hydrated.
- Quit tobacco usage.
- Reduce your salt intake.
- Moderate your protein consumption.
- Create a kidney-healthy eating plan with a dietitian.
- Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables.
- Limit alcohol consumption.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you have any concerns about your kidneys, talk to your doctor. They can help you identify any problems and make sure that they're addressed before they become serious.

"KEEP Healthy," National Kidney Foundation, [kidney.org/keephealthy](https://www.kidney.org/keephealthy), accessed Feb. 2, 2023.



Endometriosis and the Necessity of Awareness

March is Endometriosis Awareness Month. Endometriosis is a gynecological condition with symptoms including extremely painful periods, painful sex and infertility. It causes womb tissue to appear in other parts of the body, leading to inflammation and scarring throughout these tissue deposits during menstruation. Though endometriosis is often referred to solely in the context of women, it can also affect intersex, transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Across the globe, an estimated 200 million individuals are affected, which is roughly equivalent to one in ten people.

Endometriosis has a debilitating impact on the quality of life of those who experience it, yet getting a diagnosis still tends to be an incredibly difficult process. According to research, it takes an average of seven and a half years between a patient's first consultation regarding their symptoms and their receiving a firm diagnosis.

Endometriosis symptoms can be different for each person, immediately making diagnosis more complex. It also offers a particular challenge in the way it affects multiple organs at once. Still, many cite communication issues and a lack of recognition for the disease as their belief for why a diagnosis is so difficult to come by.

In one case study, a patient said she felt that her physicians consistently implied that the severity of her symptoms was due to a "mental health condition."

She argued that her pain was often dismissed as psychological rather than being taken at face value and that she was made to feel that "she was crazy." She also felt that without her mother's fierce advocacy, the physicians might never have pursued additional testing.

This is a similar sentiment to those echoed by many others who share this patient's experience, including pop singer Halsey who has long been an outspoken advocate for awareness regarding reproductive illnesses. She shared via Twitter that receiving an endometriosis diagnosis "was the most bittersweet moment because it meant I wasn't crazy! I wasn't a 'baby!' I had every right to be feeling like the world was caving in."

It's clear there's a disconnect between the current wider understanding of endometriosis and the system of appraisal necessary to actually identify the problem as soon as symptoms appear and accurately treat it. However, taking this month to listen and learn about the realities of this disease and how we can each be advocates for ourselves and others is certainly a step in the right direction.

"Endometriosis: why is it so hard to diagnose?" Circle Health Group, circlehealthgroup.co.uk, accessed Feb. 5, 2023.

"Endometriosis: A Common and Commonly Missed and Delayed Diagnosis," Patient Safety Network, psnet.ahrq.gov, accessed Feb. 5, 2023.

"Halsey Warns They Might Go 'MIA' After Being Hospitalized for Endometriosis: 'I Am Doing the Best I Can,'" US Weekly, [usmagazine.com](https://www.usmagazine.com), accessed Feb. 5, 2023.

Better-For-You Individual Seven-Layer Snack Cup

Prep Time: 5 minutes
Serves: 4

Layer...

- 1 cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- ¼ cup original hummus
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed and drained
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup Pico de Gallo, store-bought or homemade
- 1 ripe, fresh avocado, halved, pitted, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons scallions, sliced

...in that order, into four small glasses or jars, or a small serving dish, dividing evenly. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts: 200 calories, 8 g total fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 520 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrates, 8 g fiber, 0 g added sugar, 14 g protein

Recipe adapted from loveonetoday.com.

