

Learn about APOL1 kidney disease

APOL1 kidney disease is a type of **chronic kidney disease** (CKD) linked to a certain gene called the **APOL1 gene**.

People with Western and Central African ancestry have a higher chance of APOL1 kidney disease. Most people don't know they have kidney disease until it is more serious.

What is chronic kidney disease (CKD)?

Chronic kidney disease is when your kidneys get damaged and slowly stop working. This can lead to kidney failure and other health problems such as heart disease.

Signs and symptoms that your kidneys may not be working well



Foamy pee

Peeing more often than usual



Feeling tired

Feeling nauseous



Loss of appetite

Weight loss without trying



High blood pressure

Swelling in your legs

What causes APOL1 kidney disease?

APOL1 kidney disease is CKD that is linked to an abnormal version of the APOL1 gene (piece of DNA) that you may have been born with.



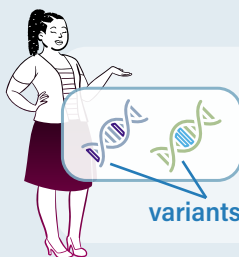
Everyone has 2 copies of the **APOL1 gene**.

Some people have an abnormal version (a variant) of the APOL1 gene that can raise their chance of developing CKD.



variant

If someone has 1 copy of this variant, they have a **slightly higher chance of getting CKD** than people with no variant copies.



variants

If someone has 2 copies of this variant, they have a **much higher chance of getting CKD** than people with no variant copies.



However - only **1 in 5 people** with **2 variant copies** get CKD. People with 2 variant copies may only get CKD after a **second** condition triggers it, such as high blood pressure.

Who gets APOL1 kidney disease?

APOL1 is often found in people with Western and Central African ancestry, such as people who identify as:

- Black
- Afro-Caribbean
- African American
- Latina/Latino



APOL1 by the numbers

For people with Western and Central African ancestry in the U.S.:

About **4 - 5 people in 10** have at least **1 variant copy** of the gene.

A little over **1 in 10 people** have **2 variant copies** of the gene.

How do I know if I might have APOL1 kidney disease?

If you have Western and Central African ancestry, **ask your doctor about genetic testing for the APOL1 variant.**

Genetic testing is important because most people with APOL1 kidney disease:

- Get CKD **before age 50**
- **Don't find out they have CKD until they have symptoms** and their kidneys have already been damaged

There are currently no treatments for APOL1 kidney disease – so it is best to find out if you have APOL1 kidney disease through genetic testing before it damages your kidneys.



Genetic testing for APOL1 is not common. Speak up for yourself and share this flyer with your doctor if you want to get tested!



Where can I learn more?

Learn how you can keep your kidneys healthy:

[NIH - Preventing Chronic Kidney Disease](#)



[National Kidney Foundation - 6-Step Guide to Protecting Kidney Health](#)

Learn more about APOL1 KD:

[Kidney Health Initiative - APOL1 PDF](#)



[CDC - Chronic Kidney Disease Basics](#)

Learn more about APOL1 KD:

[National Kidney Foundation's APOL1 KD page](#)



[American Kidney Fund's APOL1 KD page](#)