

Hold the salt. Be kind to your kidneys



By Pinky G. Aragonés

AS Filipinos, we love our food to be rich and flavorful, not just plentiful. Unfortunately, most of these foods are also oily, high in sodium and preservatives which are all bad for our kidneys.

The number of Filipinos with kidney problems is quite alarming. According to the Philippine Society of Nephrologists, there are 1.5 million Filipinos suffering from kidney problems to date.

This was confirmed by Dr. Richard Hizon, a practicing Nephrologist at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute during an interview with Dear PhilHealth, the radio program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation aired every Wednesday over DZRH 666 KHz AM.

According to Hizon, a good number of middle aged and elderly Filipinos have kidney problems. Kidney stones or renal calculi is one of them.



The kidney is one of the most important organs of our body. These five to seven centimeter bean-shaped excretory organs perform the Herculean task of regulating the blood pressure

and electrolytes, and maintaining acid-base balance. As it serves as our body's natural filter, it produces the urine which is composed of the blood's waste products such as urea and ammonium.

The kidney produces some hormones and is

responsible for the re-absorption of water, glucose and amino acids.

Stones in stone

The kidney stone is a hard, crystalline mineral material formed within the kidney or in the urinary tract. Anyone may develop a kidney stone but some people are more susceptible to it. The culprit: unhealthy diet, health conditions, and family history.

Symptoms of kidney stones vary. Some experience blood in the urine without any symptoms, while others feel a sudden onset of excruciating pain in the lower back, chills, fever, and nausea.

Hizon said that kidney stones can be treated either by medical management or surgery depending on the size of stones. If not addressed by medication, lithotripsy and shockwave are usually done if the stone does not pass through the urether to the bladder on its own even with medication.

"Many Filipinos with kidney problems need dialysis or kidney transplant" Hizon stressed. This was corroborated by the fact that chronic renal failure and other disorders of the urinary tract ranked fifth in PhilHealth's claims payment list in the first quarter of 2010.

As in any other health problem, early prevention is still the key. Eating in moderation and having regular check-ups especially among those with family history of kidney stones should be observed, he added.

PhilHealth pays for the removal of kidney stones through lithotripsy, shockwave and surgery. It also covers qualified patients being dialyzed either in the hospital or in the comfort of their homes via peritoneal dialysis.

