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York Central welcomes World Kidney Day

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Thursday, March 12 was World Kidney Day and at York Central Hospital it was a day to raise awareness and educate staff, patients and residents to the importance of your kidneys and how you can ensure they remain healthy.

Blood pressure tests, blood-sugar level tests and dietary information were just some of the interactive displays on hand for those who were looking to keep tabs on their kidney health.

"This is all about raising awareness and educating people as to how they can maintain a healthy kidney," said Barbara Grey, manager of York Central's chronic kidney disease program.

"It is important to know your family history and to also know how you can make changes to your daily life, which will benefit the health of your kidneys dramatically," Ms Grey added, before sitting down to have her blood pressure taken by Johanne Denis, chronic kidney disease clinical practice leader.

And as far as healthy kidneys go, often the status of your kidneys comes down to the old saying 'you are what you eat,' with a common enemy of kidney diseases coming from high blood pressure caused by a high sodium intake.

Salt can often be the determining factor in the case of kidney health and according to dialysis program dietician Rachel Linzon, it is common for many of us to go above and beyond our recommended daily sodium intake, despite never reaching for the salt shaker.

"To maintain a healthy blood pressure, health experts suggest we should eat between 1500 and 2300 mg of sodium per day. Many of us go over that number because 77 per cent of the salt we consume is hidden salt; the salt you don't see in processed or pre-packaged foods.

"Only about 11 per cent of the sodium we consume is from salt that we add to our food at the table or in our cooking," Ms Linzon added.

She said one way to combat high sodium is by going back to basics, cooking from scratch and eating a lot of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, though in today's busy life, meal preparation and healthy eating is often a challenge.

"It's not easy to plan ahead and all of us are busy, but it is important to be aware of all the sodium additives in various products and to not only look at fat and carbohydrate levels to determine healthy eating. As you age, your kidney health will depend on it," Ms Linzon stressed.

Much of the equipment on display and staff members taking part in York Central's world kidney day forum, work in the hospital's new Chronic Kidney Disease unit, which opened last November.

The new Chronic Kidney Centre is equipped with 27 dialysis stations; each spot featuring a lazy-boy style recliner, multiple solitary stations for patients who may be ill or carrying an airborne virus or flu, and also small rooms where family and supporters of patients receive education from the staff regarding dialysis and the lifestyle changes that must be made and possible impact this treatment will have on their lives.

Last Thursday, the unit's manager Ms Grey said the chronic kidney unit is up and running smoothly and is currently full of patients requiring dialysis care.

"We are like one big family down there," Ms Grey said. "Patients can socialize with each other and the staff; everyone is there together. So far the new unit has been a success," Ms Grey added.

For more information on World Kidney Day and kidney health visit www.worldkidneyday.org