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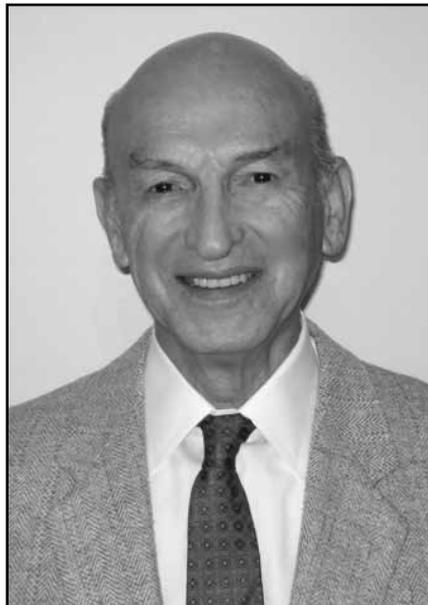
# The Vital Importance of the Kidneys on Our Health

Lino Stanchich, L.N., L.M.B.T.

*The following article is excerpted and edited by Lino Stanchich from his book, The Natural Bladder Control Program, © 2007 by www.greatlifeglobal.com with additional editing by Julia Ferré.*

**A**re you often tired, lethargic, dogged by procrastination or laziness? Did your “get-up-and-go” ...go? Do your hips, knees, and other joints ache or have arthritis or osteoporosis? Are you sleeping too much or too little? Experiencing aches in the lower back, poor posture, or dark circles under your eyes? Craving sugar, alcohol, or drugs? Losing your edge, drive, and ambition? Conversely, are you taking risks, driving too fast, or otherwise living dangerously? Women, are you suffering PMS, hot flashes, sterility, frequent fatigue? Men, are you becoming impotent, losing hair, or losing ambition and drive? Is it difficult to make decisions, make money, or make love? Struggling with hearing loss, recurring urinary tract infections or frequent urination? Heal and strengthen your kidneys!

Called the “Seat of Health,” the kidneys are neglected and abused in our culture. Yet, they deserve the highest respect and care. The kidneys influ-



**LINO STANCHICH**

ence the condition of the bones, joints, cartilage, hearing, and levels of minerals and water in the body. Consider the epidemics of joint and bone disease, urinary tract infections, and sexual dysfunction. The kidneys influence sexual health, from fertility to virility, and control the condition of the hair, nails, and acid/alkaline balance in the body. In addition, the kidneys directly influence the emotions of fear, including low self-confidence and shyness. It is clear

that these organs profoundly influence the health of our bodies, emotions, and relationships in our lives.

The two kidneys are located in the abdominal cavity just above the waist on either side of the spinal column. Each kidney is approximately the shape and size of the ear (and directly influence hearing). A quart of blood passes through the kidneys every minute. Each kidney has one million nephrons that filter the blood, regulate electrolytes and eliminate wastes. Among the conditions and foods most adversely affecting the kidneys are:

- high fat, animal foods-based diet
- hydrogenated fat and canola oil
- cold—feeling cold from the environment or eating cold food
- poor quality salt or excessive use of salt
- mineral imbalance, either too high or too low
- excess fats clogging the nephrons
- lack of exercise, or extreme exercise
- deficiency of sunshine, vitamin D, and fresh air
- staying up too late at night
- lack of sleep or excessive sleep
- insecurity, stress, and anxiety
- excessive sexual activity or lack of sexual activity

• horror movies or frightening activities

Partnering with the kidneys is the bladder, centered in the lower abdomen. The bladder holds approximately one pint of urine, depending on the individual's body size and health condition. Healthy urine is amber in color, as in a light beer. Clear or pale urine indicates the consumption of excess liquid and/or a shortage of minerals. Darker urine indicates dehydration, possible infection, and/or excess salt and animal food consumption. Many people who drink too much liquid have "wishy-washy" thinking, indecision, procrastination, shyness, and social phobias and fears. Highly popular cold, icy, sweetened sodas and beverages are a main cause of modern illnesses including kidney/bladder related bone loss, back and leg pain, arthritis, and emotional insecurity. We can improve kidney and bladder functions and help maintain healthy urinary function through sound macrobiotic dietary and lifestyle practices.

Macrobiotic foods are hydrating with frequent soups, whole grains cooked with ample water or broth, abundant fresh, juicy vegetables, and the omission of most animal foods, baked flour products, and processed, salty packaged foods. However, if anyone eats excess salt, dried snacks (including rice cakes), too many toasted foods, and omits healthy beverages, one can become dehydrated. Over time, this can develop into a serious condition. The typical macrobiotic beverage recommendation is to drink a cup of tea upon awakening, then one after each meal to aid digestion. In addition, drink whenever thirsty. Always listen to your body! I recommend drinking pre-boiled spring or filtered water because it is sterilized and strengthening for the kidneys. However, fresh spring water is fine in warm weather or if one is exerting and perspiring. Avoid iced drinks. (This one essential practice alone can reduce bone and joint pain.) In restau-

rants, where one is generally served iced water at the beginning of a meal, order hot water, with or without lemon. The water has been boiled and will soon cool to room temperature. I often take my own tea bag or just enjoy the hot water. It is delicious and excellent for the kidneys, which detest cold.

In order to evaluate basic visual signs of kidney health, observe yourself closely each day. Look directly beneath the eyes above the cheeks. Occasional dark circles under the eyes indicate that the kidneys are not functioning properly because the person is under stress or did not sleep sufficiently the past night. If these

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dark circles are chronic, the kidneys are too contracted due to the excess use of salt (most likely poor quality) or eating too many dry baked goods such as cookies, muffins, breads, chips, etc. If there is swelling underneath the eyes it usually indicates recent consumption of excess liquids including beer, sodas, sugared drinks, caffeinated drinks, or fruit juices. Purple underneath the eyes near the nose indicates the consumption of drugs, chemicals, or other toxic substances. Again, cold foods and beverages are to be strictly avoided while on a kidney/bladder health regime.

Water, water everywhere! Many people have adopted conventional

recommendations of drinking eight to twelve glasses of water every day. Persons who consume large quantities of animal food and/or excess and poor quality salt may need to drink more liquid in order to attempt to flush their kidneys of excessive toxins, sodium, and protein. The macrobiotic diet eliminates excessive animal food consumption and promotes the use of balanced sea salt. Water recommendations (RDA's) were non-existent prior to 1970's Water Diet, simply because it was traditionally known that people consume liquids when thirsty! The popular habit of drinking excessive amounts of water has led to an epidemic incidence of incontinence, bone and joint deterioration, arthritis, and osteoporosis. Athletes have collapsed and died from lack of minerals and extreme dilution in their blood from excess water consumption. Other people have experienced seizures, mental confusion, body chills, incontinence, and fatigue from excess consumption of water. Too little water is no good as is too much. Just as in watering a plant, balance is best.

A simple way to know if you are drinking too much is to count how many times you urinate each day. Normal urination is generally five to seven times a day and zero times at night, depending on exercise, climate and environment. Examine your urine properly by urinating into a clear glass container. The color of the urine should be slightly yellow, like the color of light beer. If the urine is dark and especially if there is a strong odor, there may be either an infection or an excessive amount of animal protein, dairy products, eggs, baked flour products, and fats. This may also be an indication of dehydration. Drinking adequate liquids is essential. Also, the amount of salt should be reduced or eliminated for short period of time. Urine the color of water indicates a consumption of excess liquids, which can lead to a shortage of minerals in the body. The healthy urine stream is strong and steady, without hesitation,

pain, or pressure.

The most important thing you can do to develop healthier kidneys and bladder is to eat whole, organic natural foods, balanced for your unique needs, while avoiding harmful food and beverages. Delicious whole grains, protein-rich beans and bean products, fresh vegetables (especially root vegetables), strengthening sea vegetables, occasional fish, beneficial oils or fats, seasonal fruits, seeds and nuts, natural sweeteners, and healthful beverages form the foundation for a macrobiotic diet. These healing and strengthening foods provide abundant quantities of complex carbohydrates, fiber, minerals and vitamins in their most natural and nutritious form and with the correct balance necessary for kidney/bladder health.

I recommend that whole grains and whole grain products comprise 30% to 50% of the volume of every meal, or approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the plate. Vegetable soups, lightly seasoned with miso, tamari, soy sauce (shoyu), tamari, or sea salt should comprise from 5% to 10% of the daily diet. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, macrobiotic theory, and centuries of observation and experimentation, it was found that the best quality proteins for kidney and bladder health are plant-based protein in beans, which may comprise 5% to 10% of the daily diet. It is vital to eat beans daily for good kidney health. Aduki/azuki beans are the most strengthening for the kidneys. Alternate with others, such as hearty chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, and occasional white beans, pintos, and bean products such as tofu and tempeh. Cook enough beans for two days and reheat before eating. Thus, one may eat a totally vegan macrobiotic diet and thrive. Optional small amounts (4 ounces maximum) of white-meat fish may be consumed once or twice a week, if desired. Beans cooked with kombu sea vegetable and fish accompanied by a dish of prepared sea vegetable, provide optimum dietary and

digestive balance.

I recommend that 25% to 35% of each meal consist of a wide variety of fresh, organically grown vegetables, which tonify and cleanse the blood and are needed for fiber, minerals, and vitamins. At each meal, eat simply steamed or boiled dark leafy greens such as kale, collards, mustard greens, broccoli, and bok choy. The best vegetables to strengthen the kidneys and heal incontinence and excessive urination are root vegetables such as onions, carrots, burdock, parsnips, and turnips. However, strictly avoid potatoes, tomatoes, green pepper, chard, spinach, and eggplant, because they contain oxalic acid, which prevents the absorption of minerals. This practice alone helps many people heal their bone and joint pain. Cold raw salads are not recommended while you are strengthening weak kidneys and bladder. Prepare pressed salad instead. Follow balanced macrobiotic

dietary guidelines for specifics for the preparation of a variety of colorful, delicious vegetables, salads, and pickles.

Delicious sea vegetables are valued for their high mineral and trace element content. Research shows that the majority of Americans have mineral deficiencies, which lead to bone loss, osteoporosis, mental illness, hair loss, impotence, infertility, and other chronic debilitating health conditions—all kidney related. Consuming excessive amounts of all refined carbohydrates (such as white sugar), animal protein, sodas, caffeine, and alcohol tend to increase these deficiencies. Sea vegetables help heal incontinence and strengthen the kidneys. Enjoy delicious wakame in soups, kombu in beans, arame in stir-fried vegetables, dulse in salads, and agar in refreshingly sweet desserts. Your daily diet should consist of 5% of high-mineral cooked sea vegetables.

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The best fruits to heal and strengthen weak kidneys and bladder are ones that grow in temperate climates, contain less water, and are not too sweet, such as apple and pear, which can be baked, steamed, or eaten as apple/pear butter or dried apples/pears. Other acceptable fruits include dried apricots and currants. In general, avoid consumption of citrus and tropical fruits, even if living in warm climates, when on a kidney/bladder strengthening program. However, if your general condition is healthy or if your condition requires relaxing, refreshing foods, have some raw, temperate climate fruits as your environment dictates.

Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds,

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and sesame seeds (especially black), are nutritious on a daily basis. Seeds provide delicious flavor, satisfying protein, and minerals to strengthen the kidneys and bladder. Lightly roast the seeds in a non-oiled pan to enhance their natural flavor and digestibility. Macrobiotic gomashio, made with toasted sesame seeds and sea salt is a staple condiment to use at the table for flavor. Avoid commercial table salt.

Salt is the most important food and condiment in the human diet. For the past 30 years, with world leaders in natural healing, I have studied, researched, and experimented on the

effects of salt and trace minerals on the mind, body, emotions, sexual function, kidneys, glands, and urination. The quality and the quantity of salt used in food preparation is most important for the proper functioning of the entire body, especially for the kidneys, bladder, and reproductive organs. The amount of salt needed varies, depending on each person’s age, physical condition, lifestyle, climate, and activities. Women are more sensitive to salt and generally, but not always, require less salt than men.

For healthy kidneys and bladder, use the highest quality sea salt in carefully measured quantities in cooking, rather than adding at the table. However, even good quality sea salt used in excess can be detrimental to the kidneys and bladder. The kidneys are very delicate organs. In order to function at their best, the kidneys require the best quality of minerals and in the right amount.

In addition, use healthy oils, seasonings, and sweeteners to round out a macrobiotic diet. Healthy grain-sweeteners will satisfy the sweet tooth, but will not hamper healing. If you have a strong desire for sweets, use the following healthy, natural sweeteners in main courses, dressings, desserts, and beverages:

1. Dried Chestnuts, cooked alone or with brown rice or sweet brown rice, are the healthiest and most strengthening sweet on this program.
2. Fresh Carrot Juice (six ounces), made within 15 minutes of consumption, is an excellent, sweet pick-me-up anytime of day, but especially in the afternoon.
3. Brown Rice Syrup is a delicious grain sweetener that has the texture of honey. If needed, one teaspoon each serving, with a maximum of three teaspoons a day in tea or cooking.
4. Barley Malt is a rich, dark sweetener made from barley with the texture and flavor

similar to molasses. If needed, one teaspoon each serving, with a maximum of three teaspoons a day.

5. Amasake, a rich, creamy, sweet rice drink, (Plain, Almond, and other flavors) is available at health food stores and can be homemade.
6. Fruits that grow in temperate climates can be eaten in cooked, baked, or dried form. Note: I do not recommend maple syrup or agave for a kidney-strengthening regime.

I have researched water quality for 35 years and its effect on the human body, which is about 70% water. I strongly recommend that only spring water, bottled within 50 miles

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*“A good night’s sleep is essential for strong kidneys, especially in the winter, to recharge the body’s energy, and to stay healthy.”*

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of your location, be used for cooking and drinking. However, filtered and well water is also adequate. If you use filtered water, make sure the filter is a solid carbon filter. Completely avoid distilled or reverse osmosis water, because those tend to weaken the kidneys, reduce body minerals, and increase urination.

Restaurants generally do not use the healthiest water or sea salt. If you have an exceptionally healthy restaurant, natural food caterer, or personal chef available in your area, discuss my recommendations with them. If they agree to strictly follow your recipes and ingredient recommendations, seek their services. I recommend the use of a gas or wood stove (if available and appropriate), as opposed to

electric or microwave cooking. Purchase healthy pots and pans, such as stainless steel, cast iron, enamel-coated steel, and enamel-coated cast iron. Avoid aluminum and non-stick pans.

We are not only what we eat, but also how we eat. Many of today's health problems are caused by the chaotic manner in which people eat their meals. Eat balanced whole foods in a calm, conscious manner, on a regular daily schedule. When meals are planned with consideration for specific needs, we reduce cravings and the likelihood of eating fast foods, unhealthy foods, processed foods, and over-salted snacks. Adopting orderly, healthful eating habits saved my life and gave me vibrant health. You can achieve extraordinary results as well.

Set a daily schedule and stick to it. In the morning, eat breakfast approximately one hour after waking. Then, space your meals about four to five hours apart. Some people need a snack in between meals, in late morning or afternoon. If possible avoid this, but if you are hungry at these times, eat a small amount of healthy, whole foods—not packaged, convenience, or junk food. Some people only need two meals a day—one in late morning and one in afternoon, and this is fine. Do not eat anything solid three to four hours before going to bed.

How much you should eat depends on your condition, your body type, and your level of activity. Some people are fast metabolizers and require more quantity or frequency of food. Others are slower metabolizers and require less food. Generally, the amount of food at a meal is, on average, about the size of two fists.

Chew your food thoroughly to speed the healing process. The more one chews the grains, beans, and vegetables, the more effective is this program. I observe this again and again. Try it! Carbohydrates are pre-digested in the mouth and chewing changes the food into energy, creates better absorption of nutrients, improves digestion, and increases vitality. The simple act of

## **The Natural Bladder Control Program**

**by Lino Stanchich**

*Lino Stanchich is a macrobiotic counselor of many years, serving on the faculty of the Kushi institute and involved in macrobiotic learning centers throughout the United States.*

*His latest book, The Natural Bladder Control Program, published in 2007, contains specific dietary and lifestyle recommendations for bladder and kidney health. The first half of the book discusses the program in depth and includes information such as anatomy of kidneys and bladder; causes and solutions for incontinence, and self-evaluation of kidney and bladder conditions. The second half of the book contains recipes from soups to desserts.*

*For anyone experiencing discomfort in kidneys or bladder or for anyone desiring to strengthen kidneys and bladder; this book is a valuable resource. Lino Stanchich provides conventional macrobiotic recommendations in his warm and thorough manner.*

*— Book Review by Julia Ferré*

calm, thorough chewing provides innumerable health benefits. I recommend that all carbohydrates (grains, beans, vegetables) be chewed a minimum of 25 to 75 times per mouthful. I realize that this may sound challenging, yet after one or two weeks of dedicated practice, chewing becomes easier.

Walking is the best exercise for the kidneys, and is excellent for the nervous system and brain. A real mood-lifter, walking helps to de-stress the body and mind, while reducing depression. Even simple strolling is beneficial to the kidneys and bladder. Do not walk too fast. Rather, walk at a pace that allows you to comfortably carry on a conversation. If you walk before you eat a meal, walk at a more brisk pace. It is best to walk outside, but if that is not possible, use a walking machine or treadmill that has the ability to regulate incline.

If you do not join a club or the weather is harsh, stay inside and walk in place. The best time to walk briskly is as soon as you get up in the morning for 15 to 30 minutes, after each meal for 5 to 10 minutes, at a slower pace, and then between dinner and bedtime for 20 to 30 minutes. When you adopt a daily walking routine, you will notice amaz-

ing improvements in your total health.

For the best of health, go outdoors daily, get light in your eyes and receive moderate sunshine (avoiding mid-day sun) to revitalize your body and absorb vitamin D. Follow Benjamin Franklin's advice, "Early to bed, early to rise, makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise." A good night's sleep is essential for strong kidneys, especially in the winter, to recharge the body's energy, and to stay healthy. Go to bed by 10:00 p.m. and get up by 6:00 a.m. or before sunrise. Too much sleeping, lying down, or sitting weakens the kidneys and bladder.

I recommend all natural bedclothes, clothing, and toiletries. Self-massage (especially of the kidneys), daily meditation, prayer, laughter, volunteering, and healthy sexual practices enhance urinary and overall wellness, improve communication, and enhance joy of life.

If you have developed a chronic and/or severe kidney/bladder disorder: 1) Assess the seriousness of your problem under the guidance of your primary care health practitioner and/or macrobiotic counselor—your condition may need urgent medical attention;

and 2) Consider and explore alternative complimentary solutions. My guidelines are to be used in conjunction with individualized professional dietary guidance and conscientious macrobiotic study. Whatever form of treatment you choose, understanding the vital functions, structure, and macrobiotic perspectives of the kidneys and bladder will tremendously enhance your well being for a lifetime. Eat well, laugh often, love others, and cultivate gratitude for life!

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*The following recipes are by Jane Quincannon and are excerpt from The Natural Bladder Control Program.*

## STRENGTHENING ROOT VEGETABLE SOUP

This delicious soup is strengthening, warming, and excellent for the kidneys. It is highly beneficial for people who are incontinent, feel weak, insecure, have a pale complexion, fatigue, or a low sex drive. This is especially good in cold weather or if one feels cold. You may eat this soup either for 3 days, once a day (best at evening meal) or 3 times a week for 3 weeks. Do not eat it every day beyond 3 days or for a longer time than I recommend, as it may make you too tight (yang) and contract your kidneys or body too much.

- 1 tsp untoasted sesame oil, optional**
- ½ cup each of 2 or 3 root vegetables, thinly sliced (carrot, burdock root, lotus root, parsnip, or other root vegetable)**
- 1 pinch sea salt**
- ½ cup onion, thinly sliced, placed in a separate bowl**
- 1 tsp barley miso**
- 1 tsp sweet white miso**
- 2 tsp fresh parsley or scallions, minced**

On a low flame, heat untoasted sesame oil in a 2 quart soup pot. Add the

thinly sliced root vegetables to the skillet. Sauté roots for about 8 minutes until tender, but still crisp. Add a pinch of sea salt as you sauté. You may water sauté if you do not wish to have the oil.

Add water to cover the vegetables and simmer for 20 minutes. Add finely cut onions and simmer 10 minutes.

In a cup, mix barley and white misos. Add hot soup broth to the miso and stir well.

After vegetables simmer 30 minutes, reduce the heat, add the miso and stir gently. Simmer soup 5 more minutes (remember not to boil the miso). Serve warm, garnished with fresh parsley or scallions.

## SWEET VEGETABLE BUTTERS

- 1 cup onion, finely chopped**
- ¼ tsp untoasted sesame oil**
- small pinch of sea salt**
- 2 cups root vegetables:**
  - for carrot butter—2 cups of carrots chopped in 1-inch pieces.**
  - for squash butter—2 cups of peeled squash chopped in 1-inch pieces.**
  - for parsnip butter—2 cups of parsnips chopped in 1-inch pieces.**
  - for onion butter—2 cups of chopped onions.**
  - for chestnut butter—2 cups of cooked chestnuts.**

In a heavy pot with a tight lid, sauté onions in sesame oil on medium to low flame. Add salt and sauté the onions until they are translucent, about 8 minutes.

Add root vegetables. Add enough water to cover the vegetables and cook on low flame. If flame is too high, use a heat diffuser under the pot.

Check and stir every half hour or so and if needed, add more water. Add only small amounts of water, as you want a vegetable butter and not a soup. Simmer for about 2 to 3 hours.

When vegetables are cooked thor-

oughly mash with a potato masher, fork, or mill.

Let the “butter” cool before placing in jars and refrigerating. Use within 2 weeks. One portion is 2 tablespoons. Spread on steamed whole grain bread or rice cakes.

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*Lino Stanchich is a macrobiotic educator, researcher, and counselor with over 30 years experience. He is a respected teacher of the macrobiotic diet, philosophy, and lifestyle, along with energy exercises (Chi Kung), shiatsu massage, Do-In self-massage, and special eating techniques. Lino received the Aveline Kushi Award in 2006. He serves on the faculty of the Kushi Institute Summer Conference and is a member of the Kushi Institute Macrobiotic Educators Association. A Licensed Nutritionist and Licensed Massage and Bodywork Therapist, Lino is a multi-lingual educator who has studied and worked with the top macrobiotic teachers including Herman and Cornelia Aihara and Michio and Aveline Kushi.*

*Lino established macrobiotic learning centers in Providence, Rhode Island; San Francisco, California; West New York, New Jersey; Boulder, Colorado; Escondido, California; Tucson, Arizona, and Asheville, North Carolina. He has lectured at many major macrobiotic centers throughout the world, as well as to universities, hospitals, medical schools, corporations, and the United Nations Macrobiotic Organization.*

*Lino is the author of Power Eating Program: You Are How You Eat, Macrobiotic Healing Secrets, and The Natural Bladder Control Program, and has created a “Healing Mealtime Music” cassette, a self-massage and exercise video “Energize Yourself,” and audios “Laugh for the Health of It” and “Using Your Mind to Heal Your Body.” Lino lives with his wife, Jane, in Asheville, North Carolina where they conduct a wide variety of macrobiotic educational activities.*

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