

Understanding Primary aldosteronism

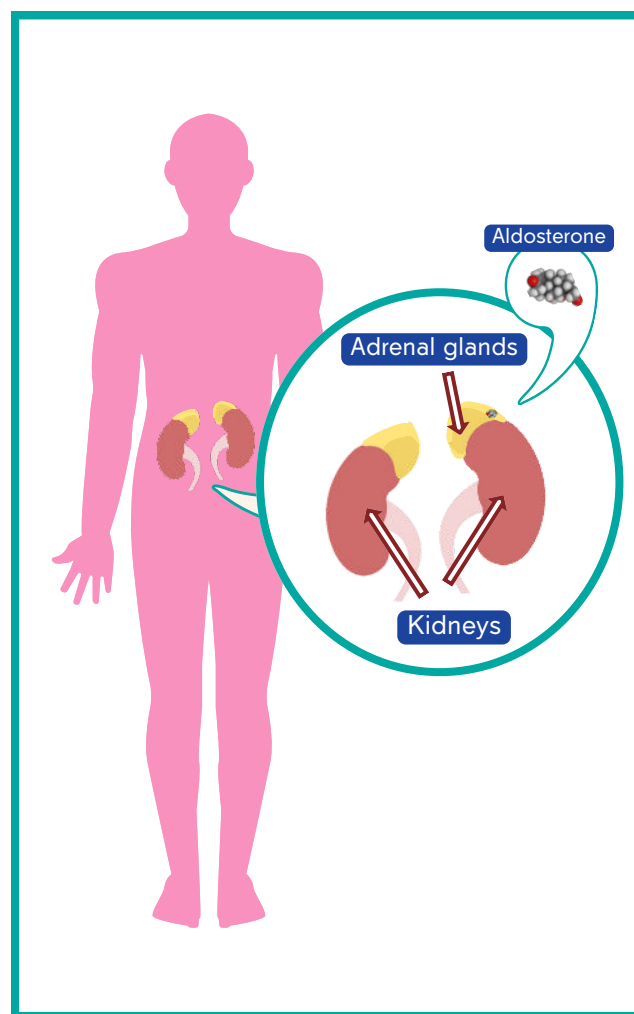
What is primary aldosteronism?

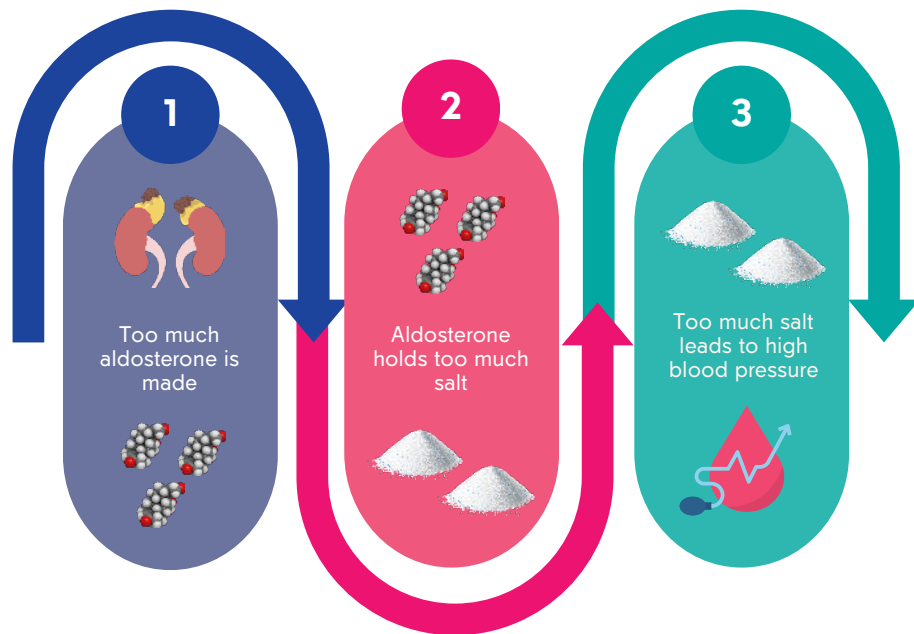
Your body has two kidneys and two adrenal glands. The adrenal glands are small organs that sit on top of each kidney. They make important hormones to keep you well. One of these hormones is aldosterone.

Aldosterone helps to control the level of salt in your body. This helps to keep your blood pressure normal.

Primary aldosteronism is a disease where the body makes too much aldosterone. If you have primary aldosteronism your body holds onto salt. This usually leads to high blood pressure.

Too much aldosterone can damage the heart, brain, kidneys and blood vessels. People with primary aldosteronism are more likely to have heart disease, stroke and kidney failure.





What are the different types of primary aldosteronism?

There are two main types of primary aldosteronism:



Bilateral primary aldosteronism: This is when both adrenal glands make too much aldosterone. It is the most common type of primary aldosteronism.



Unilateral primary aldosteronism: This is where one adrenal gland makes too much aldosterone. This is sometimes called “Conn Syndrome”.

Both types of primary aldosteronism can be passed down in the family. If someone in your family has this condition, you should be tested for it.

What are the main symptoms of primary aldosteronism?

Most of the time people with primary aldosteronism have no symptoms. They usually develop high blood pressure. The usual medications for high blood pressure may not work for people who have primary aldosteronism.

People with primary aldosteronism may also have low potassium in their blood. This makes them feel weak and tired. In serious cases it can make the muscles stiffen and unable to move. It can also make the heart beat too fast or unevenly.

What are some other possible symptoms?



Feel
anxious



Feel
tired



Have trouble
concentrating



Wake up
many times
at night to
pass urine

How can you find out if you have primary aldosteronism?

Do you have high blood pressure? If you want to find out if primary aldosteronism is causing your high blood pressure you will need to see your doctor for a blood test. This is particularly important if your high blood pressure is hard to control.

If your blood test is abnormal or unclear, your doctor will refer you to a specialist called an endocrinologist. The endocrinologist will assess and treat you if you have primary aldosteronism.

If you have primary aldosteronism you may be treated with surgery or medication.