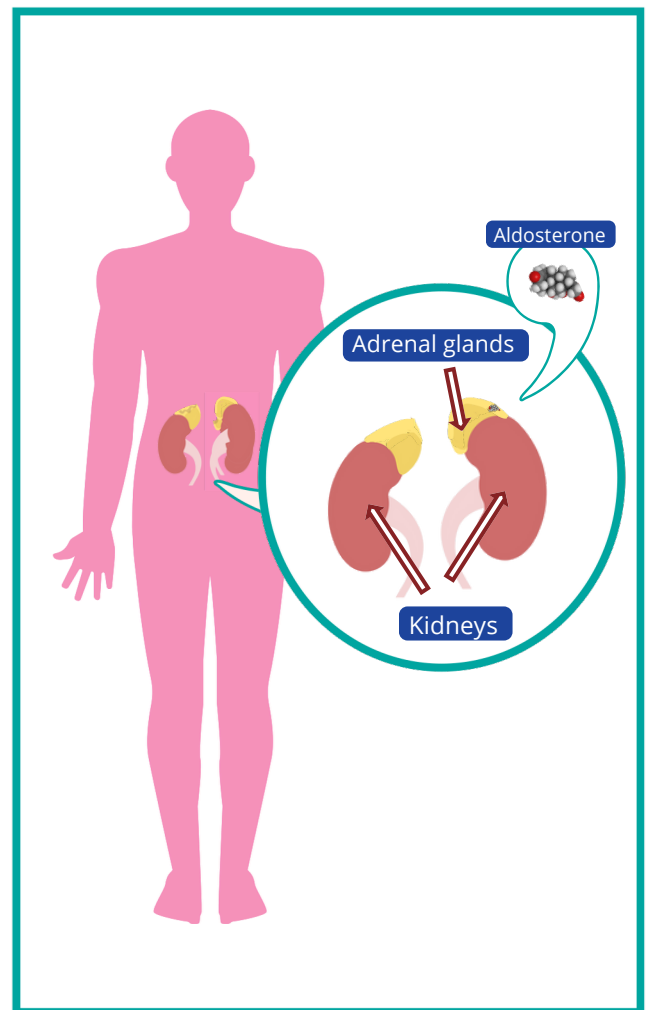


Understanding Primary aldosteronism

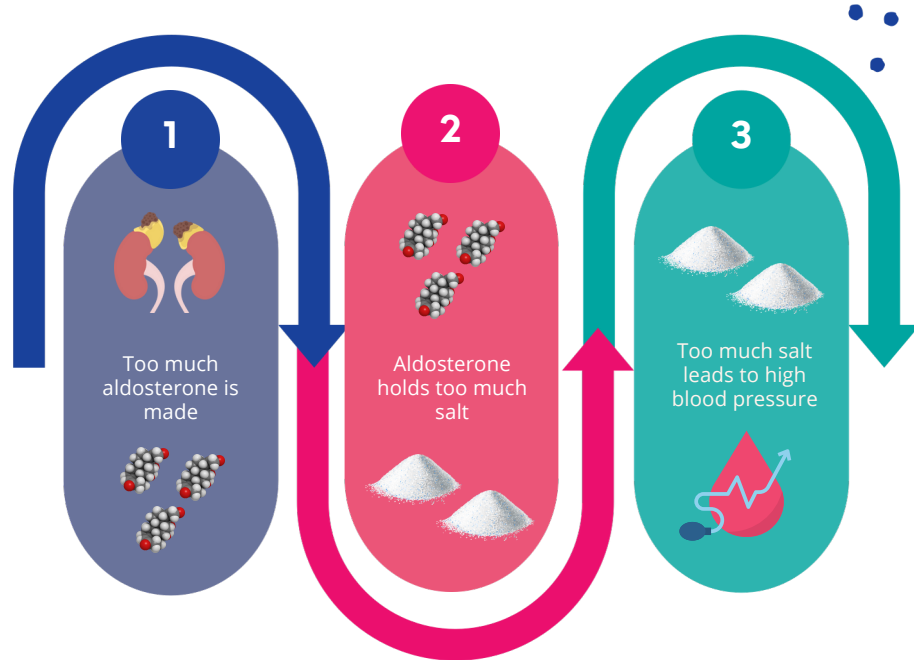
What is primary aldosteronism?

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 your body retain salt. This is important for keeping your blood pressure normal. However, if your body makes too much aldosterone, your body will retain too much salt, which often leads to high blood pressure.



Primary aldosteronism is a disease where the body makes too much aldosterone that may cause high blood pressure, and damage to the heart, brain, kidneys and blood vessels. People with primary aldosteronism are more likely to have heart disease, stroke and kidney failure, but the risk is minimised with appropriate treatment.



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”.

Primary aldosteronism can be passed down in the family. If you have a first degree relative with hypertension, you should be tested for it.

What are the main symptoms of primary aldosteronism?

High blood pressure is the main symptom of primary aldosteronism. Commonly used medications are often unable to bring the blood pressure down to normal healthy levels. Most of the time people with primary aldosteronism have no other unique symptoms. Many people with PA report a wide variety of health issues, such as lethargy, anxiety and brain fog, that are often mistaken for ageing, menopause or mental illness. These are often caused by untreated PA.

People with primary aldosteronism may (but not always) 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?

Have you been diagnosed with 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.

PA is a very treatable condition but without proper treatment, you are at risk of developing other serious health conditions

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

More information about primary aldosteronism is available at the Primary Aldosteronism Foundation www.primaryaldosteronism.org/. Information for both doctors and patients can be found at: www.hudson.org.au/disease/hormones-disorders/endocrine-hypertension/

Plain language resource created by enliven Victoria