

Kidney Emoji: A Rallying Call

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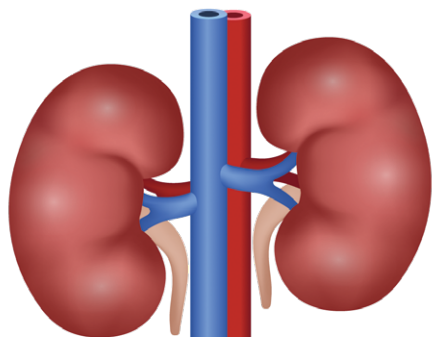
Emoji are text-embedded pictograms used to communicate and provide context in written electronic messages. Billions of emoji are sent worldwide every day (1). There currently exist anatomical heart (❤️), brain (🧠), and lung (🫁) emoji but no kidney emoji. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects 1 in every 10 people (2), yet kidney health literacy is limited in the general population (3) and even in those with CKD (4). The introduction of a kidney emoji would help jumpstart a global conversation about kidney health in the general population. Here are the steps needed to transform this idea into reality (5).

Emoji are regulated by the Unicode Consortium, which standardizes all characters used in electronic communication across technological platforms (5). Proposals for new emoji are reviewed annually by Unicode and must follow strict formatting guidelines that include a proposed design for the emoji, expected usage level, and justification for why the emoji is needed (6). Proposals are strengthened by including community support and by rallying endorsements from relevant professional societies. ASN and several other major nephrology societies have written letters supporting the creation of a kidney emoji (7). The American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), which launched the Decade of the Kidney in 2019, spanning from 2020 to 2030, fully backs the effort. Paul T. Conway, Chair of Policy and Global Affairs for AAKP stated, “In the past 10 years, American kidney patient consumers have shown great skill at impacting health policy and innovation through social media activism and direct engagement with government officials. A kidney emoji will immediately scale the global impact of kidney patient voices, raise broader public awareness of the disease and encourage the United Nations, the World Health Organization and other bodies to sharpen their focus on the growing crisis posed by kidney disease and failure.”

We propose an emoji depicting both right and left kidneys, ureters, renal arteries, and renal veins (Figure 1) and seek community feedback (caitlyn.vlasschaert@queensu.ca) on this provisional design from individuals living with kidney disease and from kidney health professionals. If approved, the kidney emoji will be a standardized and familiar icon available for widespread use in professional and interpersonal communication (5). ■

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Figure 1. Proposed kidney emoji design



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