

# FOOD CHOICES

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY IRENE AGUZZI

Kidneys are the master chemists of the body. They produce vital hormones that help regulate blood pressure and control mineral levels that keep bones healthy. They also clear your system of toxins such as the excess of medications or the waste product of muscle activity known as creatinine. Proactive management of kidney disease can make all the difference to one's health and quality of life. Making the right food choices is part of that critical difference.

**Mr. Karen Rongve** learned he had kidney damage when he was diagnosed with a **parathyroid tumour** in the 1960s. But it wasn't until 2004 that his blood pressure rose to such a degree that he found himself lying flat on the golf course, completely weakened. **Karen's** kidney function had dropped to 20 per cent.

"Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two most frequently preventable or treatable causes of kidney failure," notes **Paul Shay**, National Executive Director of **The Kidney Foundation of Canada**.

Today, **Karen** knows the value of health self-management, particularly the importance of food choices. Healthy eating, along with daily exercise and the use of medications as prescribed, are allowing him to join his wife and caregiver, **Sylvia**, as a full participant in the lifestyle they cherish including golf and travel. **Karen** doesn't equate diet with a weight-loss regime. He believes it's about making food choices that are beneficial to his health. "It's all about having the right balance of magnesium, phosphorous, potassium and other nutrients. I don't eat processed foods because of excess salt content, and I eat out very rarely," says **Karen**. "It's a decision you have to make - managing your health."

A retired teacher, **Karen Rongve** continues to learn and encourages others to do so as well.

For more information on living with kidney disease and healthy food choices, visit **The Kidney Foundation of Canada's website** at [www.kidney.ca](http://www.kidney.ca). It features a comprehensive manual, many brochures and fact sheets, renal recipes and a blog by registered dietitian, **June Martin**.



*Karen Rongve  
and his wife Sylvia*

