

Caring for Yourself When You Have Kidney Failure



Kidney failure and its treatment will mean changes in your daily life. Whatever changes you need to make, your healthcare team can help you with them.

Your daily life

You may wonder how your treatment will fit into the rest of your life. But with some changes, you can live a full life with kidney failure. If you work, talk with your employer about any changes you need to make in your duties or schedule. You may find that your energy levels go up and down. And you may notice new physical problems. If you aren't able to do your daily activities as before, your healthcare provider may suggest treatments. Or they may send you to physical therapy.

Food, drink, and medicines

- Any treatment you have will put some limits on what you eat and drink. A dietitian will work with you. They will help you understand these. You may need to stay away from foods that are high in salt, potassium, or phosphorus.
- Treatment means taking medicines. Some of these you need to take 1 or more times a day. Others are given to you during treatment or healthcare provider visits. Have a list of the medicines you take. Show it to any healthcare provider you visit. Also check with your provider or pharmacist before taking any medicine that is not on the list. This includes aspirin. Many medicines are eliminated or processed by the kidneys. Your dosage may have to be adjusted by your provider or pharmacist. Other medicines may harm your kidneys, and you may not be allowed to take them. This includes IV (intravenous) dye injected during some body scans.

Making healthy choices



You can make choices about your lifestyle that will help your treatment work better. Exercise may reduce your treatment's side effects. It can also help you control your weight and blood pressure. Ask your healthcare team which types of exercise are good for you.

If you smoke, it's important to quit. Smoking narrows (constricts) blood vessels and causes infections. These are both dangerous to people with kidney failure. Talk with your healthcare team about quitting.

If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, it's important to control your sugar levels and blood pressure as directed by your provider. Keep your weight in a normal range for your body. And keep your cholesterol levels controlled too.

Always wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace. Carry a list of your medicines and your providers in your wallet or on your phone. Have your partner or a close family member do the same.

Looking after your health

With the right treatment, you should start to feel better. If you follow all the guidelines you are given and still don't feel well, tell your provider. Some changes may need to be made in your treatment. You will need regular checkups with your provider.

Checking in

Circle the statements below that are true for you. For each statement you don't circle, ask a healthcare provider to help you learn what you need to know:

- I have a list of all the medicines that I take.
- I know who to talk to when I need extra help or support.
- I know which foods I should eat. I also know how much I should eat.
- I have talked with a healthcare provider about exercise.
- I have names and numbers for all my healthcare providers.
- I know what my insurance covers and what it doesn't.

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