

## Can I live a normal life if I have chronic kidney disease?

Absolutely. Many people with chronic kidney disease (CKD) can live long and active lives whilst on dialysis. There are some key actions you can take to make sure you look after yourself and reduce the risk of developing any other health problems, including;

### Attending your dialysis sessions



Ensure you attend your complete dialysis session. Full attendance will make you feel better and allow you to lead a more active and healthy lifestyle. Studies have shown that patients who comply with their dialysis sessions do much better in the long term than those who miss an appointment. If you do not attend your dialysis regularly, you make this choice at your own risk. Alternative session times may be available if your current regular sessions become inconvenient.

### Fluid management



As a dialysis patient, your kidneys are no longer able to gauge the right balance of fluids for your body. To help your body and make you feel much more comfortable during and after your dialysis sessions you must track and manage your fluid intake. Always follow the fluid guidelines given to you by your healthcare advisors. If you have been advised to reduce the amount you drink, some ideas to manage your fluid intake between sessions include reducing your salt intake, sucking on ice cubes and eating frozen grapes.

### Exercise



It's important to maintain your body's strength, posture and suppleness. Exercise prevents pain, reduces fatigue and improves circulation and coordination. You may feel exhausted on dialysis days, but on the days before and after you should be able to exercise as normal. If you cannot or exhaustion symptoms persist, speak to your treatment team.

### Habits



- Alcohol consumption – you may still be able to drink alcohol if you have kidney disease, but it's advisable not to exceed your daily fluid intake limits as alcohol intake also contributes to your daily fluid allowances. Be sure to discuss this with your doctor.
- Stop smoking – quitting smoking can improve your overall health and reduce your risk of many other health problems.

## Living life to the fullest



- Relationships – living with a CKD diagnosis can place a strain on you, your family and your friends. Coming to terms with all the lifestyle changes, dependency on regular prescribed treatments to live, many new medications you might be on and limiting impacts on physical and social engagements can be extremely challenging and it's not unusual to feel anxious, depressed or that there is little meaning left in your life. Communication is essential: try and talk about how you feel and let your family and friends know how they can help. Remember to take time for yourself – you need it.
- Social support networks – there are plenty of support networks for those also living with CKD or undergoing dialysis treatment. Your doctor and surrounding healthcare team can help you to find these support groups and can answer any questions or worries.
- Sex – having CKD can affect a sexual relationship. It is common for people with kidney disease to experience a decreased libido or sexual dysfunction. Try and share your feelings with your partner, and if you are experiencing any persistent problems with sex, speak to your care team.
- Return to work – if you're well enough, you can keep working for as long as you feel able. Talk to your employer as soon as you feel your condition is affecting your ability to do your job so you can find a workable solution. For example, it may be possible for you to work part-time or take time off for adjustment.
- Vacations – with careful preparation, dialysis patient can go on holiday. Speak to your care coordinator for more information and support on this and on how to arrange dialysis sessions at a facility near your vacation location.

## Diet



Just as you manage the amount of fluid you drink, so must you adjust the food you eat to reduce strain on the kidney. Our dietitian will assist you chose the type and amount of food. Please ask your treatment team to guide you through answers to the questions:

- How do foods with sugar including carbohydrates affect my energy levels and diabetes? What are the best sources of fibre and carbohydrates for me?
- How do I manage my potassium levels? For example, how many bananas can I eat?
- What are sodium and phosphorous?
- How much salt is good for me?
- What should I eat to improve my anaemia?
- Which foods will improve my cholesterol?
- What foods should I eat if I have muscle cramps? Or constipation? Or fatigue?

For a comprehensive list of references and contributors involved in the creation of this material, please refer to the included reference sheet.