

Take Care of Yourself

Taking Time for Fun

With or without chronic kidney disease (CKD), life is what you make it. Some patients with CKD may choose to withdraw. Others may choose to do as much as possible and live life to the fullest. The choice is yours.

Maybe you want to spend more time with family and friends. If so, plan an outing with them. They'll appreciate your effort and you can feel good about taking charge.

Decide what is most important to you now. Then take the steps necessary to make it happen.

Tips for Coping

You might feel like you are no longer in charge of your life, but the truth is, you're probably finding ways to be more in control than ever. Going to dialysis, changing your diet, and taking your medications takes more strength and dedication than you may realize.

But your physical needs are only part of it. Your mental and emotional needs require attention, too. How you find this happiness is called coping. These coping tips have worked for others and may help you, too.

Learn about CKD. Ask your renal care team for how you can get more involved in your care. The more you learn about treatment options, the more confident you'll feel about getting the best care possible.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle. Following a kidney-friendly diet and staying active with exercise is good for your body and your mind. You'll feel better, which is important to helping you keep a positive attitude.

Talk about CKD with others. Inform loved ones about kidney disease and ways to prevent it ? you may feel like you've taken a positive step.

Open up. If you need to talk, vent, or just let go, it's okay. Sometimes, releasing your thoughts and feelings ? health related or otherwise ? can help you look at a situation in new ways.

Listen without judging. Pay attention to what others have to say. Even if you disagree, hear them out. You might be surprised at what you learn.

Volunteer. As your energy level allows, making a meaningful contribution to helping others ? whether it's tutoring, stuffing envelopes, or speaking publicly about the importance of organ donation ? can do wonders for your outlook.

Laugh. Enjoying time with friends, watching a funny movie, and seeing the humor in everyday situations can sometimes be the best “medicine” for coping.

Spending Time with Family and Friends

Having the love and support of family and friends can go a long way as you journey through CKD. Your loved ones can help you through the good times and the difficult times. How much you let them is entirely up to you.

When you spend time with loved ones, taking care of yourself can often fall by the wayside. This may be especially true with food. Try these tips for eating with family and friends:

Talk to your renal dietitian about “forbidden” foods. He or she can give you tips for being around food without overdoing it

Eat a little snack at home before you go out so you’re not as hungry. Then, eat only small portions, take your time, and don’t eat until you’re stuffed

Ask your dietitian to recommend a kidney-friendly dish you can share with your family

With a little planning, you can make spending time with loved ones kidney friendly.

Transportation

With chronic kidney disease (CKD) and any additional conditions you have, it may be a challenge getting to doctor appointments, the grocery store, and other places. However, there are some helpful options to consider:

Ask a friend or family member to drive you to your doctor appointments

Take a city bus, taxi, or other public transportation to get around

Talk to your social worker for information about government-sponsored transportation for senior citizens or those who cannot get around easily

While you’re at dialysis or with your support group, if you belong to one, talk to others with CKD about how they handle transportation challenges.

Recognizing Emotional Issues

Dealing with CKD can be difficult emotionally and physically. If you feel like you're having trouble with emotional issues, talk to your renal care team. Medications, treatments, and other help may be available.

Seek comfort and guidance from those you trust. Talk to your family and close friends. Keep up any spiritual or religious activities that may help you.

Above all else, tell your doctor right away if you're experiencing any emotional issues.

Manage Your Time Wisely Around Treatment

Scheduling Activities and Tasks

Your time at your dialysis treatment or doctor appointments is a great opportunity to take care of all the things that are a part of your daily life. Use this time to your advantage.

- Talk to others with kidney disease. They can be a source of strength and support, and they may also be able to give you tips on how to stick with your treatment plan
- Learn about something interesting like a new language or photography
- Bring a sketchbook and practice drawing
- Bring your kidney-friendly cookbook and plan meals for the week
- Strengthen your mind with brainteasers and puzzles
- Bring an audio book and a comfy pillow, and use the time to relax If you rely on spirituality for support, spend some time in prayer
- Laughter is the best medicine! Bring something humorous to read.
- Use the time to make a list of questions for your kidney care team
- Make your to-do list for the week
- Bring your checkbook and stamps, and pay your bills

Dialysis can run up to 4 hours each visit, depending on the clinic. Take advantage of your time there. You may find that the work you do at your health care appointments can make your daily life a little less hectic.

Care for Your Overall Health

Preventive Screenings

In addition to managing your chronic kidney disease (CKD), you also need to keep up with other medical screenings. Talk with your doctor every January about "preventive maintenance" screenings you'll need for the coming year and mark them on a calendar.

The tests you need depend on your age, your health, and whether you are male or female, so

work with your nephrologist to ensure that your tests are done as necessary. Below are some examples of tests recommended by the US Department of Health & Human Services for the average person:

General Tests

- Cholesterol test
- Blood pressure test
- Diabetes screening
- Fecal blood test
- Mental health screening (depression)

Men

- Prostate exam
- Testicular exam

Women

- Pap smear
- Thyroid test
- Bone density test
- Mammogram

You should also keep your immunizations current. Most of these were done when you were a child, but several need to be updated periodically, such as

- Flu vaccine
- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussi (Tdp)

Be sure to take advantage of free health screenings at malls, public events, and pharmacies.

Managing Multiple Chronic Conditions

Managing Multiple Medications

Often, patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) take multiple medications for a variety of ailments and conditions. Sometimes, it's a real challenge to remember which medication to take and when, not to mention how much of every medication to take and what each is for.

One thing you can do is to make a chart, like the sample below, to keep track of your medications.

Name of medication	Reason for taking medication	Number of times to take medication	Time to take medication	Take with food?	Prescribing doctor
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Med #1	High Phosphorus	3 times per day	At meals	Yes	Matthews
Med #2	Diabetes	2 times per day	8 AM, 8 PM	No	Aaron
Med #3	High Blood Pressure	1 time per day	8 AM	No	Greenberg
Med #4	Anemia	2 times per day	8 AM, 8 PM	No	Greenberg

Here are some steps you can take to help make sure you manage your medications properly:

- Try to have all of your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy so the pharmacist can keep track of all the medications you are taking
- Make a list of all your medications and their dosages, and keep a copy with you when you're out and about
- Take your medications at the same time each day
- Keep your medications in the same place

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