

Staying Active and Involved If You Have Kidney Disease



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Before You Started Dialysis

Think about life before you started dialysis. What did your life look like? What were some of your favorite things to do? Did you work? Did you go to school or volunteer? With whom did you regularly visit? What hobbies did you have? Were you involved in your church?

Right from the start of dialysis, it's important to keep up with the rest of your life. Connect with family and friends. Remain involved. Stay healthy. Think about going back to work.

Fitting your life to your dialysis schedule can be a challenge. But it can be done. Here are tips for making dialysis work for you and the life you want to live.

- Know that dialysis takes time. If you are active, check with your dialysis care team about early morning dialysis. If you work, maybe a Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday treatment plan is best for you.
- Schedule activities around your dialysis treatment. Dialysis first.
- Take each day, one day at a time. Everyone has difficult days. Remain as positive as you can. Tomorrow will be different.
- Be the advocate of your dialysis care plan. Take charge of your life and the best options for you.

Stay Connected with Friends and Family

Dialysis can make you weak and tired. Then you may have to rely more than you used to do on a spouse, sibling, child, or other family member. You may feel guilty about your situation or think you are a burden to others. These feelings and thoughts can make you feel sad and frustrated. You may end up pushing your loved ones away.

Talking about your feelings with your loved ones can:

- Help you feel understood.
- Help you and your loved ones know what you need and when you need their help.
- Reduce stress and misunderstandings.
- Empower you and your family to be advocates for your dialysis care plan.

Adjusting to dialysis and lifestyle changes takes time. Sometimes, you might not feel like being with others. Do your best to stay in touch with your friends. Reach out by phone or FaceTime. A quick call can lift your spirits and keep you connected to those who matter to you.

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Remain Involved in Activities

Starting dialysis is a big lifestyle change. It is normal to feel sad by the change to your lifestyle. One way to adapt to your new way of life is to give back. If you were an active member of your community, do your best to stay involved. If you are unable to return to work, consider being a volunteer. Staying active can remind you that you have valuable skills and knowledge to offer.

As a person with kidney disease, you can help others who are starting dialysis. Think about joining a support group for people with kidney disease. You can connect with people who are going through the same things you are. Peer mentoring programs are also available. Through these programs, you can find a peer mentor for support. Or you can be a peer mentor to someone who is looking for support.

If you were involved in social activities like bingo, chess, book clubs, arts and crafts, or other groups, do your best to stay connected to them. Maybe you can't attend every event or meeting. Attend as often as you can.

Maintain Your Wellbeing

Keeping in good health is an important part of feeling as good as possible while on dialysis. The National Kidney Foundation offers steps to stay healthy:

- Lower high blood pressure.
- Manage blood sugar levels.
- Use less salt.
- Eat more protein.
- Do not take pain pills like Aleve and Advil.
- Get your vaccinations, especially flu.

Regular exercise adds to your wellbeing. It can give you more energy. And you may sleep better.



Start slowly and build your strength. Take your time. Even a short 5- or 10-minute walk each day can improve your overall health and wellbeing. Always talk to your doctor before starting any type of exercise.

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Your diet also matters to your overall health. Choosing kidney-friendly foods can be hard. Talk with your dietitian about foods that are best for you. Every kidney patient's diet is different. Your diet will depend on your treatment plan and other health issues.

Keep a diary of foods you eat. The diary will help you understand your eating habits. It will track the good and not-so-good foods you are eating. Share your diary with your dietitian at your facility.

Many kidney-friendly recipes are available on the Internet!



Create a Pathway Back to Work

Returning to work can boost your self-esteem and give you a sense of purpose. Working also provides income and benefits that can help you prepare for a kidney transplant. To get ready to return to work, create a daily and weekly schedule. Start with your dialysis times. From there, focus on what days you can work. Know your limits. For example, if you work in a job that requires extreme physical activity, you may need to think about a different type of job. Talk with your employer about what kind of work you can do. When going back to work, here are tips to consider:

- Slowly return to work.
- Ask to change your work hours.
- Move from full-time to part-time work.
- Talk with your care team about home dialysis options. Home dialysis offers greater flexibility in your schedule.

Check Out Resources

These resources have information about adjusting to dialysis and going back to work:

- Social Security Administration: [Ticket to Work Program](#)
- Kidney Fund: [6 Tips to Help You Adjust to Dialysis](#)
- National Kidney Foundation: [Staying Fit With Kidney Disease](#)
- American Psychological Association: [Living Well on Dialysis](#)
- National Kidney Foundation: [Find a Recipe That's Right For You](#)

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