



BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE A Fact Sheet for People with Chronic Kidney Disease

If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD) or if you have reached kidney failure, you should know that although life has changed and you may feel overwhelmed at first, eventually you can learn to adjust and live well. Kidney disease does not need to define us. In fact, having kidney disease has taught many of us the importance of appreciating and living each day to the fullest. Thousands of people with CKD are empowered, educated and encouraged to be their own best advocate through the NKF's "People Like Us" movement. "People Like Us" is made up of people just like you with CKD and their caregivers, transplant candidates and recipients, living and potential donors and donor families. To help you and others through "People Like Us":

Learn all you can about kidney disease and your treatment choices including self-management. For more information, read *Choosing a Treatment for Kidney Failure* www.kidney.org/ATOZ/pdf/choosing_treat.pdf

Partner with your health care team – participate in your care plan meetings, ask questions and discuss recommendations. For some people this may seem intimidating, but YOU are the most important person on the health care team.

Share your personal story, support and connect with other people like you through NKF's online Message Boards at www.kidney.org/patients/mboards.cfm and NKF's Facebook page at www.facebook.com

Educate others – tell them what you have learned about managing your health and being part of your health care team.

Eat a "kidney-friendly" diet. Nutrition is important for preserving kidney function and slowing the progression of CKD. Share what you know about eating a kidney-friendly diet and new recipes with your loved-ones. Get recipes at NKF's *Kidney Kitchen* www.kidney.org/patients/kidneykitchen and information about eating healthy with CKD www.kidney.org/kidneydisease/ckd/nutrition.cfm

Understand the importance of lifestyle when you have CKD and how changes to diet and exercise can make a big difference in your health, and are easier than they seem. Read *Getting Ready for a "New Normal"* and *A New Normal: Life on Dialysis* (call NKF at 1-800-622-9010 to request copies)

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Cope with a new diagnosis of CKD and get the support you need to manage challenging emotional, family, relationship, and financial changes you may be experiencing. Caring professionals, friends, family members and loved-ones are eager to help. Read *Coping Effectively: A Guide for Patients and Their Families* www.kidney.org/atoz/atozItem.cfm?id=100 and visit www.kidney.org/patients/pfc/messages_hope.cfm to read NKF Patient and Family Council Executive Committee members' *Messages of Hope*.

Join the "People Like Us: Take Action Network" at www.kidney.org/takeaction to learn about and use your voice on kidney disease, donation and transplantation-related public policy issues. When you join, you will receive email alerts and guidance for contacting your elected officials.

Join NKF's Patient and Family Council at www.nkfkidneypatients.org to receive educational and supportive materials about CKD, program announcements and other opportunities.

Volunteer with your local NKF office. Check www.kidney.org/about/offices.cfm for the NKF office in your area, and ask them how you can help.

Make a Financial Contribution to support NKF programs that are created to help people like you and others at www.kidney.org/support for details.

Need more information? Contact us at:

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