

# Helping you to Understand Kidney Failure

The Non-dialysis Treatment Option

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry thoroughly. Use hand gel, if provided, in care facilities.
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting stay at home and do not visit relatives that are vulnerable in hospital or in residential care. You will spread the illness.
- Keep the environment clean and safe. Let's work together to keep it that way. Prevention is better than cure.



# Introduction

This leaflet has been produced to help patients and carers understand supportive care as a treatment option for patients with kidney failure.

## What do the kidneys do?

The main jobs of the kidneys are to clean the blood and remove waste products, ensure your body's fluid balance is maintained and to help to control blood pressure. When your kidneys are not working as well as they should be you can start to feel some symptoms and feel unwell.

## What has caused my kidneys to fail?

Kidney Failure is a long-term medical condition which has many possible causes. Over a period of time, sometimes years, the kidneys become less able to do the job they are supposed to. There are many different causes of kidney failure and one reliable way of diagnosing kidney failure is by doing blood tests. Your doctor will have carried out any tests to ensure that all courses of treatment are considered.

## What symptoms will I have?

There are often no symptoms of kidney failure in the early stages of the disease. Blood tests taken regularly show the levels of toxins in the blood and show us what is happening with your kidneys. They also give us an idea of whether you will need to commence additional medication to help with the symptoms you may be experiencing. Later on you may begin to have swollen ankles, feel short of breath, your appetite may be reduced and you may experience nausea, itching and general tiredness. This is because the waste products are building up in your system making you feel unwell.

## How will I decide what treatment I should have?

Dialysis filters out waste products from the blood however, treatment with dialysis may not suit everyone. It is demanding on the body and time consuming. Dialysis treatment can also make some medical problems you already have worse and some patients need to spend a lot of time in hospital with problems that occur.

If it is felt that dialysis will not benefit you or if you decide that dialysis is not for you there are certain treatments we can offer which can help with the symptoms you may be experiencing. With the right treatment we can help to improve your quality of life, look after you at home and keep you out of hospital as much as possible. It is not uncommon for some patients to continue for some considerable time with a reasonable quality of life despite having very poor kidney failure.

If you decide that you want a trial on dialysis at any point you must discuss this with your renal consultant and nurses as soon as possible.

## Who will look after me once I decide?

Initially you will continue to be seen by your Consultant in the clinic where you may be referred to see other members of the team for example dietician and renal nurses. You will be commenced on a supportive pathway of care so that you can have help from district nurses. The renal nurses will also look after you and they will be available for you to contact if you or your family are worried about something or just need to talk to someone for support. They will arrange to visit you at home where they can spend time talking to you about your condition and any difficulties you may have. They can also refer you to other services as and when appropriate.

If you are unwell the renal nurses can see you and if you need to be admitted to hospital, arrangements can be made for this to be done as smoothly as possible.

## What will happen to me when my condition deteriorates?

As your condition deteriorates you will be followed up at home by your GP and renal nurses who will liaise with your renal consultant on a regular basis.

If you and your family need additional help at home this can be arranged with the help of the GP and district nursing services. This will make sure you are fully supported at home and have everything you need to make sure you are comfortable at home.

## Is there anything else I need to know or do?

It is useful to write down what you would like to happen to you when your condition deteriorates further. Some people do not like to talk or even think about dying however for some people it is important to let their loved ones know what they would like to happen to them when the time comes. We should all think about what we would like to happen to us when we die including the practical arrangements such as making a will and funeral arrangements. Some people wish to die at home in familiar surroundings and other people wish to die in hospital or a hospice. Whatever you decide, we will help to support you and your family with the decisions you make.

## Help and Support

There is always someone available for you and your family or carer to speak to, and answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to ask for help and advice and we will do our best to support you and help you if you are feeling unwell or just need someone to talk to. There is also a counsellor or a psychologist available to talk to if you feel this might be helpful.

## Useful Telephone Numbers

Chronic Kidney Disease Team: 01902 695466 or Bleep: 1552  
Haemodialysis Unit: 01902 695010  
Peritoneal Dialysis Unit: 01902 695011

## Other information sources

[www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk](http://www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk)

[www.renalpatients.co.uk](http://www.renalpatients.co.uk)

[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

[www.kidneyresearchuk.org](http://www.kidneyresearchuk.org)

[www.kidneyalliance.org](http://www.kidneyalliance.org)

[www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)



## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。