



# LIVING WELL WITH KIDNEY FAILURE





## Chapter 8

# Living well with kidney failure

## MANAGING CHANGE

Living well with kidney failure does mean a big adjustment for you and your family – but it is possible. One of the biggest challenges is to accept the differences between your life before kidney failure and your life afterwards. Dialysis, medications, diet restrictions, and/or symptom management need to become part of your new “normal.” To help manage these changes and your feelings about them, it often helps to talk to others. Seek out support. Talk to a social worker about your fears and concerns. Reach out to others who are living with kidney failure, share your feelings with friends and family, and don’t ever hesitate to ask your healthcare team when you have questions.

Kidney disease affects people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Different people may face different challenges because of their age, location, overall health or personal circumstances. It can feel like kidney failure and its treatment are taking over, but it is possible for you to take control of your life.

You may have questions about where to begin. You might be wondering how you’ll ever return to a state of well-being or enjoy doing the things that once gave you pleasure. To help you on your way, we’re going to discuss several aspects of emotional and physical well-being. We’ll also look at sexuality and fertility, the importance of getting enough physical activity to help keep you strong, and some guidelines for enjoying travel.

## Emotional well-being

For many people, finding out their kidneys have failed comes as a great shock. One day they may be feeling fine, with just a bit of difficulty shaking the flu; the next day they are told their kidneys have failed. This news can be very hard to get used to all at once.

People who have known for years that it was a possibility may have an easier time accepting the diagnosis. They have been informed of the treatment options, have participated in the decisions and have prepared themselves emotionally for the news. With time, most people come to accept that their kidneys are failing or have failed.

However, being told you have end-stage kidney failure is not good news. It takes time to accept the diagnosis and adjust to it.

## Common reactions

People have different reactions when they learn their kidneys have failed. Some common reactions to this news are feelings of disbelief, loss of control and a sense of loss or sadness. Anger is another common response – anger at themselves for getting sick, or anger at their doctor because the problem wasn’t found sooner or cannot be cured. There may also be feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression and denial.

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Acceptance doesn't always come quickly or without help. Many people find it useful to talk to someone, besides family and friends, about their feelings. If you need a person to talk to, speak to your social worker or another member of your healthcare team. It can make a big difference, especially if you're struggling with this adjustment, with your emotions, or dealing with depression and anxiety.



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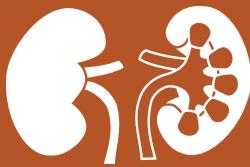
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### Talk to other people with kidney failure

Talking to other people with kidney failure can be a good source of support and inspiration. Many hospitals and all Branches of The Kidney Foundation of Canada offer peer support programs where you can get in touch with other people with kidney failure. You can also be matched with a one-on-one peer support volunteer or find information about group support by calling 1-866-390 PEER (7337). For more information, contact your local Kidney Foundation office, request support through **kidney.ca** or connect with other patients in our online community at **kidneyconnect.ca**.



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### Dealing with depression and anxiety

Many people feel depressed when they find out their kidneys have failed. Once the treatments have started – and even if they are feeling much better physically – the thought of having regular dialysis, perhaps while waiting for a kidney transplant, or perhaps for the rest of their life, may leave them feeling depressed.



Some people feel dependent on others for the first time, which may affect their ability to live the life they once enjoyed or lead to feelings of loss of control. They may find it hard to accept support from others. Emotional support from family and friends may also decrease as the shock of diagnosis fades, or they may not know how best to offer support, which can lead to feelings of loneliness.

With time and increased understanding of kidney failure, people do adjust. Each person has different ways of adapting. However, if depression continues for some time, it's a good idea to speak to the healthcare team because depression can be effectively treated. Your social worker is there to help make this transition as smooth as possible.

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## Dealing with family and friends

Family and friends are important during the best of times. During difficult times, they are even more important. We rely on them to be there when we need someone to talk with, and to give us emotional and physical support.

Your family and friends will also need *your* support. Family members may feel helpless because they cannot do anything about the illness. They may be angry that kidney disease has happened to "their" family. They may feel guilty that they did not realize the serious nature of the illness. Living with kidney failure requires changes in lifestyle. Routine chores and activities that require physical strength may be difficult to perform now. Family members or friends may have to take on added responsibilities. Your family will be concerned about you and want to support you, but may not know how. Here are some suggestions that may help:

- Let them know how you're feeling - be honest. It is useful for both you and your family if you can talk with them about your condition.
- Make sure they get information about kidney failure. Often, just knowing about the disease, its treatment and your dietary requirements will help them relax and be normal with you. Encourage them to read this handbook or read it with them.
- If appropriate, invite them to come with you to the dialysis unit, to education sessions, and/or to appointments with the social worker. They'll feel involved in your treatment and will know they're an important part of your healthcare team.
- Let them do something to help you, such as drive you to the clinic or help with home dialysis. Sometimes family members will feel better knowing they've been able to do something that is helpful for you.
- Learn to do as many things as you can for yourself. You will feel better knowing that you are as independent as you can be and this will prevent family members from becoming overburdened.
- Recognize that family and friends have to adjust to your disease, just as you do. They may have similar feelings of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

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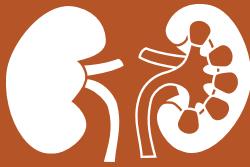
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- Sometimes, it may be helpful for them to talk to someone about their feelings. Suggest that they come and talk to the social worker or another member of your healthcare team, or speak with another caregiver through the Kidney Connect peer support program ([kidney.ca](http://kidney.ca)) or the Kidney Connect online community at [kidneyconnect.ca](http://kidneyconnect.ca).
- Investigate community resources in your area that provide help and support to caregivers.

## Common questions about coping

It takes time and patience to adjust to a life with kidney failure. Most people have a lot of questions about how they will cope and whether their feelings are “normal”. In this section we’ve tried to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

### Are mood swings normal?\*

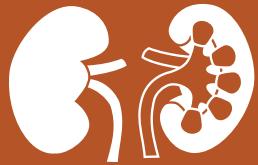
Yes, moodiness is common among kidney patients. Many people with kidney disease notice they have a “short fuse” or are cranky, when they were not like that before. And they can’t explain why.

Moodiness is often thought to be a result of the following factors:

- Uremia, or the build-up of waste products in the blood, can affect the nervous system, causing an increase in irritability, mostly in the early stages.
- Some medications may cause moodiness or make you feel depressed.
- You may have difficulty sleeping or feel constantly tired.
- You may be frustrated about changes in your health and your ability to do things.

The stress caused by chronic illness accounts for a wide range of feelings and moods. This includes general irritability, anger and frustration over the problems caused by the illness, and feeling hopeless and helpless when faced with a life-threatening disease.

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It is important to recognize that you may be more prone to being irritable, and you'll need to find ways to help lessen the tension so you don't take out your frustrations on those you love and others.

\*Adapted with permission from the National Kidney Foundation, Inc., USA.

## What should I tell my children?\*

Children can often sense when something isn't right. Therefore, it's important to discuss your illness and treatment openly with your children at a level they can understand. By explaining things to your children in a clear, age-appropriate way, you can help prevent them from developing fears and wrong ideas about what is going on. For example, sometimes children blame themselves for their parent's illness or they may dwell on "terrible" things they have done or said. This can cause problems in the future.

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Often, children may begin to behave differently after the parent is diagnosed with kidney failure. Sometimes they begin to act like "little adults" or "perfect angels". Other times, they begin to misbehave and have problems in school. These are ways children cope with a parent's illness and their fears about that illness.



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If you feel unable to talk to your children, speak with your social worker. The social worker may be able to help both you and your children learn how to talk openly about the treatment and fears related to it. Your social worker may refer you to other services, if needed. The Kidney Foundation of Canada also has resources to help explain chronic kidney disease to children.

Finally, try to find pleasant activities that both you and your children enjoy doing together. Look for activities that you will be able to continue despite the demands of kidney failure and its treatment.

\*Adapted with permission from the National Kidney Foundation, Inc., USA.

### See Chapter Seven:

**Practical matters: Work, money and insurance** for more information about employment-related issues.

### Can I keep my job or continue going to school?

That depends on the type of job or the demands of schooling. You may feel better emotionally if you continue to participate in work or school. You may need to make some changes to your schedule to meet your health and treatment needs. For example, you might need to change your working hours to allow for dialysis treatments. Talk with your healthcare team to see if there is anything that can be done with your treatment schedule to help you fit it into your work or school schedule. It is important not to let your health suffer because of the normal stresses of work, so speak with your doctor and your social worker about this.



### How long will I live?

This will depend on many things including your overall health. People can live for many years on different types of treatments. There have been recent advances in treatment strategies, and dialysis and transplant methods. While dialysis doesn't do everything your kidneys did, with the proper diet and medications, you can feel better. If you have a kidney transplant, you require medications and regular visits to the clinic. Both dialysis and transplantation are treatments, not cures for kidney disease, so taking care of yourself is important. Your doctor knows your medical situation the best and would be a good person to answer this question.

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## Sexuality and fertility

### Problems with sexual functioning

Over half of all people with kidney failure experience some problem with sexual function. This can vary from just a lack of interest to a complete inability to reach orgasm. For some people, this can have an upsetting effect on their self-esteem and put further pressure on an already stressed intimate relationship. Talking about it with their partner may feel embarrassing. It can also be hard to talk with the healthcare team about sex and orgasm. Many people choose to ignore this problem because, unlike dialysis, sexual fulfillment is not necessary for survival, so they feel guilty complaining about it.



Sexuality includes many factors, such as how people feel about themselves, intimacy, and how they communicate with others. In addition, sexuality involves a range of activities that may or may not include intercourse, such as touching, hugging and kissing, holding hands and talking.

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## Causes of problems

Sexual problems can have many causes:

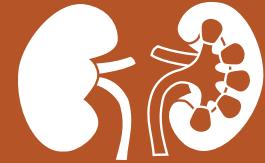
- Fatigue is thought to be a major factor. Any chronic illness is tiring, and kidney failure, which is typically accompanied by anemia and a demanding course of treatment, practically guarantees fatigue. Few healthy adults are interested in having sex when they're very tired, so it's not surprising that people with kidney failure report decreased sexual activity.
- Depression is thought to be another factor. Almost everyone experiences episodes of depression – and one of the symptoms of depression is loss of interest in sexual intimacy. Sometimes it works the other way, too. Loss of sexual intimacy can lead to depression. Either way, it's a problem that should be talked about. Don't suffer in silence.
- Sometimes medications can affect one's ability or desire to have intercourse. If you think this might be the case, talk to your doctor about it because there may be other medications that are just as effective without the side effect of loss of sexual desire. However, you must keep taking your medications as prescribed until you can talk to your doctor.
- Insertion of a peritoneal catheter, or having a fistula or graft, may cause some people to avoid physical contact for fear of feeling less attractive and worrying about what people will think.
- Other medical problems, such as vascular disease and diabetes, can lead to decreased blood flow in the genital area, decreased sexual desire, vaginal dryness and impotence.

Whatever the cause, sexual problems can often be corrected.

## How do I get help?

There are resources to help you deal with sexual concerns. The approach might be as easy as changing your medication. Talk to the member of your healthcare team you feel most comfortable with – whether that's your doctor, pharmacist, social worker or nurse. Ask for a referral to someone who specializes in sexual problems.

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The first step is a medical examination to determine if the problem is physical. This may be followed by a referral to a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, specialist nurse or sexologist to look at non-medical factors. Frequently, many people feel better just knowing they are not alone. It's reassuring to hear that other people have similar problems and that these problems can be solved.

Counselling and education often follow the assessment. Learning how to speak more openly with your partner and express your personal needs more clearly can often reduce anxiety and improve your sexuality. Doctors may also prescribe medications, lubrications or special devices that can help with dryness or impotency. Asking for help is the first step to solving the problem.



## **What can I do for myself?**

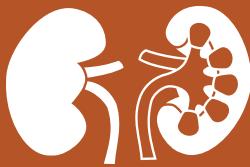
There are lots of things you can do to change how you feel about yourself. Taking extra care with personal grooming is one. A different hairstyle or some new clothes may improve the way you view yourself. When you feel good about how you look, you feel better overall.

Thinking of sexual intercourse as the only real sex act may cause you unnecessary distress if you have limited desire or energy. Sexuality doesn't have to include intercourse. There are many forms of sexual expression that don't require as much energy and are enjoyable. Simply hugging, kissing and caressing can make you feel better and improve your outlook.

If you're a little shy, books can be a good source of self-help information. Bookstores and libraries often have whole sections covering every imaginable aspect of sexuality. Browse through them - you may find a book that will help you with your concerns.

Most importantly, don't ignore the problem. If you're not satisfied with your sexuality, try to talk about it. A positive attitude is important to physical health.

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### Frequently asked questions

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions about chronic kidney disease as it relates to sexuality, childbearing and birth control.

#### Can I have a child while on dialysis?

Women with end-stage kidney disease often stop having their monthly periods. However, once a regular pattern of dialysis is established, a normal menstrual cycle might return. Although it is rare, some women on dialysis can become pregnant. Pregnancy on dialysis is difficult and you should talk to your doctor about any plans to become pregnant. Being pregnant while on dialysis is considered a "high risk" pregnancy and you will need regular involvement with an obstetrician who is used to dealing with high-risk pregnancies.

Men with end-stage kidney disease have reduced sperm counts, but this may still be sufficient to result in pregnancy.

Some men and women remain infertile even with regular dialysis treatments. They are therefore unable to have children.

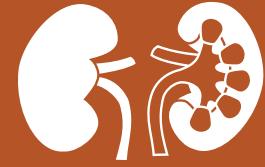
#### What about sexual intimacy after a kidney transplant?

Intercourse does not harm a transplanted kidney, so you can continue normal sexual activities whenever you want. After a transplant, you may have more energy for intercourse because your uremia and anemia will have decreased. Sometimes the medications used to control high blood pressure can decrease a man's sexual functioning. If this is the case, speak to your doctor because the medication can often be changed to one that doesn't have this side effect. Sometimes women experience pain during intercourse. Talk to your doctor about any sexual intimacy problems.

#### Can I have a child after a kidney transplant?

Women who have had a transplant usually become fertile again. However, carrying a child increases the workload on your kidney. Most doctors will recommend that you postpone childbearing for at least a year or two until your new kidney and new medications

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are very stable. Some anti-rejection medications, or other medications that you are taking, may be harmful to an unborn baby. You should check with your transplant doctor before trying to become pregnant.

After a transplant, a man's sperm count will return to normal and he may be able to father children.



## What about birth control?

Both men and women who are sexually active and do not wish to conceive a child, should use some form of birth control. Since some men and women may continue to be fertile while on dialysis, or become fertile again after a transplant, using birth control is essential for anyone who does not want to become pregnant. Talk to your healthcare team about the best method of birth control for you.

It is important to *always practice safe sex*, whether or not pregnancy is a concern. It is still possible to get a sexually transmitted disease (STD) even if you are infertile.

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## **Physical activity and recreation**

Taking part in pleasant leisure activities and maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle can go a long way toward helping you stay healthy. It is important (and fun!) to take part in social activities, sports and recreational events, and other pastimes that you, your family and friends enjoy. You may need to make a few adjustments, but they will be well worth it. Yes, kidney disease is a part of your life, but it should not consume your life.

## **Exercise, sports and physical activity**

Exercise is vitally important to both your physical and mental health. Staying physically active will give you more energy. With more energy, you'll feel like doing more things, which will make you happier and speed your return to a more usual lifestyle. Before you begin (or resume) physical activities, talk to your healthcare team about finding a suitable exercise program, sport or other physical activity program that is right for you. Everyone has different interests and physical capabilities, and these may change over time.



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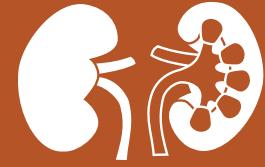
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### How much exercise is needed?

The amount of exercise you need depends on your overall health, age and physical capabilities. The recommended level of activity is 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week or roughly 30 minutes, five times per week. This can be activities like walking, cycling or swimming. This amount of exercise is the guideline recommended for the prevention and treatment of hypertension (high blood pressure) and the majority of people with kidney failure have hypertension. However, some people, such as the elderly, those with multiple other medical problems, or some people receiving dialysis, may not be able to follow such a vigorous exercise program. For these individuals walking for 15 minutes at least three times a week may be more suitable. There are also simple movements and gentle but effective exercises that can be done while sitting down. *The important thing is that you regularly do a sufficient amount of physical activity that you enjoy and that is suitable for your situation.* Your physiotherapist or other members of your healthcare team can give you suggestions about the safest ways for you to do this.



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Whatever your situation, there are benefits to be enjoyed from regular exercise:\*\*

- Improved physical functioning
  - Better blood pressure control
  - Improved muscle strength
  - Lower level of blood fats (cholesterol and triglycerides)
  - Better sleep
  - Better weight control
  - Reduced risk of heart disease
  - Development of stronger bones and/or prevention of thinning bones - a problem that dialysis and transplant patients often have
  - Reduced stress and depression
  - Meeting people
  - Having fun

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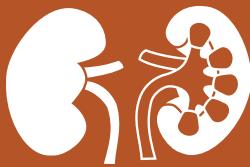
**\*\*Adapted with permission from the National Kidney Foundation, Inc., USA.**

# Travel

Whether you enjoy taking a cruise, spending a week at a resort, camping, or just a weekend away visiting family or friends, travel is still an option for you. The first step is to check with your doctor to make sure you are in stable health. Then you can proceed to make the necessary arrangements.

Make sure you have enough medications with you for the length of the trip (plus some extra in case there are travel delays). Be sure to carry a *list* of your medications with you. It is also a good idea, especially if you are travelling by air where security measures have increased, to carry a letter from your doctor stating you need to travel with these medications (and syringes, if you use them). Keep medications in their original containers or boxes with the pharmacy label so that security personnel can verify what is in the containers. Carry your medication with you just in case your luggage is misplaced or delayed.





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It may be difficult to get travel insurance if you've had a transplant. Or you might be approved for a policy that does not cover any incidents related to the transplant, but does cover other medical costs. In some cases you may be able to get insurance that does cover your transplant, depending, for example, on how stable your condition and your medications have been over a period of time before travelling.

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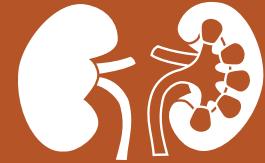


### Travelling with a kidney transplant

Here are some tips to help make your travels successful:

- Some of the medications you take to stop your kidney from rejecting make your skin very sensitive to the sun. If you are travelling to a hot and sunny location, be sure to wear sunscreen (SPF 45) and protective clothing. Drink enough liquids so you stay well hydrated.
- If you are travelling to a location where diarrhea is a common concern among travellers, this can be a serious concern for you. Be sure that you discuss safe treatments with your doctor and take a supply of recommended medications just in case.
- The medications you take weaken your immune system, which may put you at greater risk for certain viruses and other diseases. Learn about your travel destination in advance to see if there are any increased risks for hepatitis, West Nile virus or other problems due to the quality of the local water (including ice, or foods that have been washed in the local water supply).

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## Travelling on peritoneal dialysis

Travelling on peritoneal dialysis is relatively easy. That's one of the convenient things about this form of dialysis. Exchanges can be performed almost anywhere that is clean.

You will need to arrange transportation for your supplies, including dressings and your cycler, if needed. Supplies can be carried with you as carry-on luggage or shipped ahead as cargo. Do not pack your supplies with your checked luggage because the storage areas on some airplanes can get too cold for dialysis solutions and they may freeze. Be sure to tell this to the shipping company if you are sending your supplies ahead as air cargo.

If you are travelling outside of Canada, make sure to have the necessary customs documents with you.

Some companies that provide dialysis supplies will arrange to deliver them to your destination at no cost to you. Others may charge you for shipping. Be sure to make your arrangements for supplies at least six weeks before you plan to travel. Your peritoneal dialysis unit can help you with your travel questions.

## Travelling on hemodialysis

The procedures and techniques in the units you visit may be different from what you're used to. Once you've travelled and visited other dialysis units, you may have greater confidence planning future travel. With improved methods of dialysis, people are able to travel all over the world.

In fact, having the extra contact with a renal unit often makes the holiday special. You'll get interesting tips while dialyzing in a visiting unit - tips on local transportation, hotels and restaurants, sight-seeing, and local attractions. This often leads to experiences that you would not otherwise have enjoyed.

Remember, though, that dialysis units are very busy places, and may have limited space and staff, so it is necessary to make your arrangements with other units several months in advance. Your hemodialysis unit can help you with your travel questions.



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[Ask your local Kidney Foundation office for information about travelling on dialysis.](#)



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## Hemodialysis within Canada

In Canada, a reciprocal agreement among the provinces/territories allows you to be dialyzed anywhere in Canada, if space permits. Your province/territory is billed directly for the service. A directory of the dialysis centres that accept visitors (i.e. travelling patients) is available from your renal unit, local Kidney Foundation office or online at [cihi.ca/corr](http://cihi.ca/corr).

In some places, private dialysis clinics have opened. However, not all provinces/territories will reimburse all the costs for dialyzing at private clinics. Some clinics also add a surcharge over and above the amount your province/territory does cover. Make sure you find out the exact costs before you leave your home unit. Check with your provincial/territorial health plan to find out what your province/territory will pay for. It is important to submit itemized costs to your provincial/territorial health plan for partial or full reimbursement. If you have any questions about dialyzing outside of your home province/territory, talk to your kidney social worker.

## Hemodialysis outside Canada

In the United States, most units request payment four to six weeks ahead. Your province/territory may pay back some of these costs. Most provinces/territories have a limit for reimbursement for dialysis. Since many U.S. units charge considerably more than the limit, you may have to pay an additional amount for each treatment. Blood work, medications, and even just talking to a doctor may result in an extra charge. A few units require that your potassium level be tested before treatment and some units require that you be tested for HIV at an additional charge. Check these costs before you arrange your trip. Make sure to have all costs itemized separately on your invoice as this will provide more detailed information for your provincial/territorial health plan and may increase the reimbursement that you might receive.

In Europe or other countries, the cost of hemodialysis may be about the same as in the U.S., or more. Find out all of the costs in advance so you don't have any unpleasant surprises.

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Interest-free travel loans may be available from The Kidney Foundation to help pay for dialysis until you're reimbursed. Check with your local Branch for details. Your renal program or Kidney Foundation office can also give you directories listing hemodialysis units virtually anywhere you want to go.

## Making travel arrangements

Although there are more hemodialysis units now than ever before, most units run on a very tight schedule due to limited staff and space. To ensure you get on their schedule, make your arrangements four to six months ahead. If possible, plan your vacation around one dialysis unit rather than two or three different ones - the arrangements will be easier to make. Your own dialysis unit may be able to advise you about making these arrangements, but it is *your responsibility* to actually make them. Because of the technical information required, the other unit may want to talk directly to your unit's nursing/medical staff before you finalize your arrangements.

Scheduling is very important. You cannot just skip a treatment as this would increase the chances that something would go wrong on your holiday. Therefore, if you cannot dialyze on some days because of planned tours, weddings or special events, let the unit you are visiting know so your dialysis appointment can be rescheduled. Some units may allow you to choose your schedule.

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It's a good idea to check with your doctor or members of your healthcare team before finalizing any travel arrangements. Both your home dialysis unit and the unit you will be visiting need to do a lot of work to help you have your vacation. They will really appreciate when you are courteous and flexible in your dealings with them.

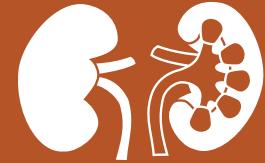
### Tips for travelling on hemodialysis

- Confirm your hemodialysis schedule a few days before your trip.
- Contact each unit again a day or two before you arrive.
- Give each unit a phone number where you can be reached in case the unit has an emergency and needs to reschedule your treatment.
- Arrive at the unit on time. Schedules are very tight and delays will affect the people who regularly dialyze there.
- Respect the rules for each unit; for example, some units ask that there be no visitors.
- If you are uncomfortable with certain techniques, discuss this right away with the nurse. Most units will do everything they can to make you feel comfortable.

### Cruises and resorts

A few companies offer cruises especially for people on hemodialysis. They have fully-equipped hemodialysis units on board, staffed with qualified medical and nursing personnel. Even though these cruises are usually expensive, they offer a unique chance to travel. The point of departure is usually an American city, although many Alaskan cruises leave from Vancouver. Cruises are also available in the Mediterranean, Baltic Sea, Southeast Asia and other areas.

# Living well with kidney failure



There are also resorts around the world for people on dialysis. They have complete hemodialysis units, are staffed with qualified medical and nursing personnel, and can cater to your special dietary needs. When signing up for cruises or resorts, always indicate any special needs you have.

## Unexpected events and emergencies

You never know what unexpected events may occur during your travels, so it's always best to be prepared. There may be unplanned travel problems such as plane delays that cause a major disruption to your schedule, local weather problems that make ground travel difficult, blackouts or other emergencies. You should try to arrange a back-up plan that you can rely on if you need to.

Be sure to carry along your latest dialysis and medical information, plus a current letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition, dialysis information, medications and contact telephone numbers.

In the case of an emergency when you have to return home immediately, explain the situation to the airline. They can usually get you a seat on the next flight, even if it's full. It's always a good idea to have a major credit card so you can buy a direct flight home if you have to.





## Chapter 8

# Living well with kidney failure

See **Chapter Seven:**

**Practical matters:  
Work, money and  
insurancee** for more  
insurance tips, including  
travel insurance.

## Travel insurance

It is wise to obtain travel insurance in case of an accident or illness. However, there are a lot of variations in the policies provided by different travel insurance companies. There are often limitations and exclusions relating to pre-existing medical conditions, age, and travel inside and outside Canada. It is recommended that you carefully compare the different policies. Your social worker may have some information.



## NOTES:

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## Summary

- Living well with kidney failure may seem an impossible task, especially when you are first starting treatment and are getting used to new routines – but it is possible and there are many people who can help support you.
- A diagnosis of kidney failure is very upsetting and can lead to all kinds of emotions, depression and anxiety, and worries about coping. Help is available to deal with these feelings and challenges.
- It's quite common to have problems relating to sexuality and fertility when you have kidney failure. Don't be shy to talk about these difficulties because there are often things that can be done to help. Feel free to talk to your healthcare team.
- It's important to take part in pleasant leisure activities such as recreational events, exercise and gentle sports, and pastimes that you like. These activities may help lift your spirits and will help keep you strong.
- Travel is a possibility with a kidney transplant, while on peritoneal dialysis and even hemodialysis, as long as suitable preparations are made well in advance of travelling.