

The KIDNEY CONNECT Peer Support Program

Connect with Someone
Who Understands



What Is the KIDNEY CONNECT Peer Support Program?

The KIDNEY CONNECT Peer Support Program is an opportunity for people affected by kidney disease to talk to others who've been there too. The program is staffed by a team of volunteers who've been specially trained as mentors for people with kidney disease and their families and friends. All the volunteers are either living with the disease themselves or have been affected by it in some way. They understand how difficult it can be and can give you the personal encouragement and support you need. Volunteers provide support mainly by telephone, but sometimes through face-to-face contact, when possible.

Who Is the Peer Support Program For?

The program is there to help **anyone** touched by kidney disease. For example, people who have been diagnosed with kidney disease or those whose kidneys have failed, as well as their friends, families, and loved ones can all use the service. It's also there for those who are considering donating one of their kidneys to someone in need.

What Help Can a Peer Support Volunteer Provide?

The Peer Support Program lets you speak with someone who truly understands what it's like to live with kidney disease, and is willing to share their own experiences with you. They can tell you about their kidney disease and how they balance their treatment with family life, work, and social activities. They'll be able to answer many of your questions, because they've been there too.

Depending on your needs, you may also speak with different volunteers at different times. For example, if you're considering switching treatments, you'll be matched with someone who has used the same treatment. Or if you're concerned about balancing work and treatments, you'll speak to someone who has successfully managed their disease and their career.

When Can I Use the Peer Support Program?

You and your family members can ask for Peer Support services whenever you need them and as often as you wish. Peer support services may be helpful at various stages, for example:

- When first learning you have kidney disease;
- When learning about the different types of treatment;
- When considering a change in treatment;
- When considering a living organ donor transplant; remember, everyone involved—the donor, transplant recipient, family members, and friends—can request Peer Support services;
- When you just need to talk with someone who's been there too.

How Do I Contact the Peer Support Program and How Does It Work?

Just call the toll-free Peer Support Helpline: **1 866 390-PEER (7337)**. The Peer Support Coordinator will ask you a few questions (such as your age, marital status, type of treatment, etc.) to help them choose a volunteer whose experience closely matches yours. Or if you prefer, you can ask for a referral to the Peer Support Program through your own renal care centre.

With your permission, the Peer Support Coordinator will contact a Peer Support volunteer to check their availability, and to give them your **first** name and telephone number. You'll also receive the volunteer's first name and the estimated time and date of their call. This way, you'll know who will be calling you and when. The Peer Support Coordinator will follow up with you after you've spoken to your volunteer to make sure everything went well. This also gives you a chance to tell us how you feel about the services you've received, or to ask for additional services.

What Are the Costs?

The Peer Support Program is free of charge. All volunteers give their time freely, and **they call you** so there are no long-distance phone charges.

Is the Peer Support Program Confidential?

Yes, all Peer Support conversations are confidential. All volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement so all discussions remain private. Also, only first names are used to protect the privacy of both parties.

Is the Peer Support Program Available in My Language?

Peer Support services are available in English and French across Canada. For other languages, we'll make every effort to connect you with a volunteer who speaks your language.

What the Peer Support Program Does *Not* Do

Peer Support volunteers will share their experiences with you, but **they do not offer medical advice**. Your kidney healthcare team is always the best source of medical information about your situation and the treatments available in your community.

“Talking with a Peer Support volunteer changed my whole outlook on treatment for kidney disease.”

“My Peer Support volunteer has continued working, traveling, and maintained a very positive outlook, and I thought, *‘if someone else can do it, I must be able to do it, too!’*”

“Talking with John was great. I was pretty overwhelmed with everything but after talking with him I felt good, felt like *‘okay, I can do this!’*”



OUR VISION

The Kidney Foundation of Canada is committed to achieving excellent kidney health, optimal quality of life, and a cure for kidney disease.

OUR MISSION

The Kidney Foundation of Canada is the national volunteer organization committed to eliminating the burden of kidney disease through:

- Funding and stimulating innovative research for better treatments and a cure;
- Providing education and support to prevent kidney disease in those at risk and empower those with kidney disease to optimize their health status;
- Advocating for improved access to high quality healthcare;
- Increasing public awareness and commitment to advancing kidney health and organ donation.

For further information, or to help us in our efforts, please contact The Kidney Foundation office in your area. You can also visit our website at kidney.ca.

Note

If you call the Peer Support Helpline number and get voicemail, don't hang up! Just leave your name and telephone number and someone will definitely call you back.

This material is available in accessible formats upon request by contacting info@kidney.ca or calling 1-800-361-7494.