

Coping with Chronic Kidney Disease

"You know it's just something that has to be done and deal with it as best you can." – Rogelio, Patient

Rogelio Garcia has been diagnosed with end stage renal disease. He gets life-saving hemodialysis treatments three times a week for four hours as a time. Balancing dialysis with his everyday life isn't easy – but Rogelio stays focused with help from his family and the team at the dialysis clinic.

"They're there to help me get to my dialysis appointment, to get me to my doctor's appointment and also just say hey things are ok, don't worry about it." – Rogelio, Patient

"Just supporting the patient and saying we're here for you. Some family members drive the patient to the dialysis unit and come back and pick them up. I've had family members that wait in the lobby all day. So there's a lot of different forms. It depends on what the patient needs emotionally and physically."
– Judy Geissler, DNP Dialysis Nurse

Not everyone with Chronic Kidney Disease needs dialysis. In the early stages of CKD, you might not even notice any symptoms. Detection is done through regular laboratory testing. Finding CKD can lead to changes in treatments and lifestyle adjustments, such as diet and exercise. It's important to try to keep the disease from getting worse.

If the kidneys become more damaged, and less able to filter the blood, you may, like Rogelio, develop stage 5 or End Stage Renal Disease. In this case, you'll have 3 options - transplant, dialysis or continued symptom management. Your healthcare team can help you decide what's best for you.

"We're all very knowledgeable and we understand that this is a difficult transition for them in their lives but it's not something that they have to just throw the towel in. A lot of patients find out that this is very manageable and if you put your time and effort into it doesn't defeat you and you still can live your life."
– Justin Martin, CCHT Hemodialysis Technician

With Chronic Kidney Disease, what you eat and drink are very important to staying healthy. A dietitian who specializes in kidney disease, can develop a diet plan just for you to help make the stresses of living with CKD a little easier to handle.

"Take it one step at a time; make small changes. But you need to be proactive. You need to understand why these are important and work with your dietitian and your physician to work your favorites into your diet."
– Kelly Welsh Renal Dietician

"They all came together to really try to help you out but yet not be overwhelming." – Rogelio, Patient

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"All very helpful. Try and tell you how to best manage it, what's best for you, what you should do or shouldn't do." – Rogelio, Patient

Social workers play a critical role if, like Rogelio, a patient's kidneys become so damaged that they need dialysis to clean their blood. Dialysis is a big lifestyle adjustment.

"Every patient is introduced to dialysis with education. Social workers play a big part in that because we can educate the patient about the coping skills that they will be developing."
– Pamela Thome, MSW Social Worker

Social worker, Pamela Thome, helps Rogelio fit dialysis into his work and school schedule.

"If there's any changes or any concerns I have, one of the first individuals that I speak to is the social worker that's assigned to the clinic." – Rogelio, Patient

"I am the person that sets them up for resources and services, answer a lot of questions, help them learn how to cope with this new thing in their life. It just depends on what people need from me. I try to fulfill that." – Pamela Thome, MSW Social Worker

Coping with Chronic Kidney Disease can seem overwhelming. But with the support of family, friends and your healthcare team, you can learn to live with CKD.