

# Working with Your Healthcare Team

When you're diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, your health care team will help you with treatment choices and lifestyle changes. There are several people on your health care team, but you, the patient, are the most important.

*"When I go to my appointment and they walk in that room, I am their sole focus."* – Sharon, Patient

Sharon Erdmann has had chronic kidney disease that requires dialysis for almost three years. She, and other patients with kidney disease, rely on a nephrologist, or kidney doctor, to lead their healthcare team, providing important information to manage their disease.

*"I usually tell patients that the number one thing they can do is really help control their blood pressure. So blood pressure control has been shown to be really the number one way that we can control that declining kidney function. So we want to get that under control as best we can."*

– Dr. Aaron Dall Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

One way to help control blood pressure is with diet. That's why dietitians, like Kelly Welsh, play such an important role in helping patients with CKD.

*"Diet is so important no matter what stage of chronic kidney disease you're in. To most importantly manage any symptoms that you might have but also to maintain as healthy of a body as you possibly can."*

- Kelly Welsh, RD Renal Dietician

*"They're there to help you a lot and try to push through on what's going on."* – Rogelio, Patient

*"What foods you know are you eating. Which one should you be eating and how much you should be having."*

– Rogelio, Patient

Other key members of your healthcare team are nurses and physician assistants.

*"The nurses are great for education and teaching patients about various aspects of chronic kidney disease and/or the end stage kidney disease, where they require dialysis."*

– Dr. Aaron Dall Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

*"Any time I have a problem, I can pick up the phone and I can call the PD nurse 24/7. They're always available."*

– Sharon, Patient

If your CKD advances to the point where you need dialysis treatments, patient care technicians and social workers will also join your healthcare team.

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*"Each of us have our own roles and mine is to really help explain to the patient what they can expect emotionally and physically as their treatment begins. And to refer them to the professionals on the team if they have questions but don't really know who to ask." – Pamela Thome, MSW Social Worker*

While there are a lot of professionals to help you live with Chronic Kidney Disease, no one is more important on that healthcare team than you.

*"They are living with dialysis. They are making their food choices. We're just here to guide and educate and really teach. But in the end it's up to the patient to be as proactive as possible."*  
- Kelly Welsh, RD Renal Dietician

Being proactive means following your CKD management plan: Eating healthy, getting exercise, taking your medications, getting regular lab tests, and follow up appointments with your healthcare team.