

Kidney Health Information

Consequences of Kidney Failure – Nephrology

What is the nephrology (or “pre-dialysis”) programme?

Nephrology is the branch of medicine concerned with kidney disease. In many cases, patients are referred to nephrologists or renal physicians via their GP and this usually means the start of the nephrology, or pre-dialysis, programme.

Do I need to take any drugs?

Renal failure usually develops gradually and the role of the renal physician is to slow that process and safeguard kidney function. Drugs for high blood pressure may be prescribed, other drugs may be necessary to correct deficiencies in the bones or blood and others may be needed to correct symptoms such as itching, nausea or shortness of breath.

What will the investigations involve?

The renal physician may want you to be admitted to hospital for a short period, but many investigations can be done on an outpatient basis. In either case, he will bring in whatever expert help is necessary

to ensure that you get the best treatment – be it medical, surgical or a combination of both – to delay the progress of renal failure.

How will my diet be affected?

Your diet will have to be carefully modified for your own individual needs, and certain foods will be restricted. Fluids may also be restricted according to your individual requirements. A dietician specialising in renal nutrition will provide you and your family with all the information required on the kind of food and fluid recommended and how to prepare it.

How do I prepare for dialysis?

The doctor will describe different treatments to you before you actually need dialysis. He will also arrange for you to visit the dialysis centre so you can get an understanding of the different options available. This can understandably be a very worrying and anxious time for you and your family, but it will help you to make an informed decision about the type of treatment that you would like.

Can I be sure I'm getting the right kind of care?

Kidney units throughout the country have expertise in the field of renal care, and a dialysis centre which offers the very latest treatments available.

Each type of renal replacement therapy within the centre has a team of specialist nurses who are highly trained in their field, using up-to-date technology to assess the length, quality and rate of treatment. In all cases, they are committed to helping you to achieve good quality of life and, with ongoing research, ensure that developments are introduced into hospitals at the earliest possible opportunity.

Most dialysis centres practise team nursing; this means that once the treatment has started, you are likely to see members of the same team of people on each visit and get to form a good working relationship. Each stage of the treatment will be planned and discussed with you and your preferences will be taken into account wherever possible. Not only will specialists explain to you and your family what is involved, they will often be able to show you as well. Experience shows that an informed patient is a happy patient!

How will dialysis affect my job?

According to the type of employment, you may find that you have to modify your job to fit around dialysis requirements, or you may find you have to give up work altogether in the short-term.

Once your condition has been stabilised, whether through dialysis or transplant, you should be able to resume a near-normal pattern of life.

Many patients enjoy a good quality of life and still hold full employment after many years on treatment.

When you go into the centre for regular treatment, the aim will be to give appointment times which are convenient to you, with an undertaking to keep to those times. At worst, you should not have to wait for more than 20 minutes.

What do the various treatments cost?

Whether you are treated as an in-patient, an out-patient or eventually elect to treat yourself at home, there is no cost to you. If you encounter any financial difficulties during the course of your treatment, there are social workers who are trained to help you. If you have any worries at all, you can simply ask to speak to the renal social worker or renal counsellor.

Will my home life ever be the same?

Maybe not exactly the same, but very nearly. Because you require long-term treatment there will be a need to compromise a little. There are different forms of dialysis available, so in most cases you will be able to choose a treatment that suits your lifestyle – rather than have to change your lifestyle to suit the treatment.

For more information please view our leaflets:

[Consequences of Kidney Failure – Dialysis](#)

[Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis – CAPD](#)

[Haemodialysis](#)

[Choosing not to Start Dialysis](#)

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