



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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What do I have to learn to help me stay as healthy as I can?

Q: What do I have to learn to help me stay as healthy as I can?

A: When you have kidney failure, it's almost like moving to a new town. You need to learn how to find your way around, meet new neighbors, and maybe even learn a new language. It takes time, but you can do it.

In the "town" of kidney failure, you'll need to learn:

- Who your care team members are, what they do, and how to reach them
- What foods to eat more of and what foods to eat less of
- What to do if there's an emergency
- What symptoms to report and to whom
- What lab tests you need, why you need them, and what their results mean
- What drugs you need, why, and what side-effects they may have
- How dialysis works, and how to know when you're getting enough
- What exercises to do to stay—or get—strong, active, and flexible
- Medical terms and what they mean
- Who to tell if you have a problem

Once you learn these things, there will be more you'll need to learn. Knowing all you can is one way to take charge of your health, feel more in control, and stay as healthy as possible.

What I can do to learn what I need to know:

- Make a list of questions to ask and keep a notebook of the answers.
- Ask one new question each time I go to the center.
- Meet with my team and ask to be included in my care planning.
- Read handouts, booklets, or brochures about kidney disease.
- Join a support group: call the National Kidney Foundation (800-622-9010) or the American Association of Kidney Patients (800-749-2257) to see if there is a chapter near me.
- Visit Kidney School™ at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.
- Visit Home Dialysis Central at www.homedialysis.org to learn more.