






Conversation starter: Managing Chronic Kidney Disease






Not sure what to say when your time is limited?







If you know you will have limited time talking with someone about daily management and coping with chronic kidney disease (CKD), use this table for general talking points.






 When you see the "ask" icon, these are questions you can ask to help start the conversation.



Topic	 If you have 5 minutes, say this:	 If you have 10 minutes, add this:	 If you have 15 minutes, also add this:
What is chronic kidney disease?	Chronic kidney disease, called CKD, means you have lasting damage to your kidneys that can get worse over time. If the damage is severe, your kidneys may stop working.	When your kidneys are damaged, they can't filter waste and fluid out of your blood. Waste can build up in your body and harm your health. <p> In your own words, how would you describe CKD?</p>	In stages 1-3 of CKD, your kidneys are still able to filter waste out of your blood. In stages 4 and 5, your kidneys must work harder to filter your blood and may stop working. You may need dialysis to help filter your blood.

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<p>How to cope with CKD as part of daily life</p>	<p>Keeping your kidneys healthy can affect many parts of your life, such as your job, family, and traveling. It can take time out of your day, especially if you are on dialysis.</p> <p>Today, let us talk about ways you could plan your time and get support so you don't feel limited in what you can do.</p> <p>As we go through these tips, let us make an action plan based on your needs. We can set goals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidney-friendly eating • Being active • Taking your medicine • Reaching out for support 	<p>Having a job or volunteering can be challenging if you are on dialysis. However, these are good ways to stay active and connected with others.</p> <p>Working also helps you have an income and possibly get health insurance through your employer.</p> <p>Find time in your busy day to take care of your health. It may help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a journal to see how you are spending your time now, and how you might make changes • Use a printed or digital planner to help you plan out your time <div data-bbox="861 893 1386 1136" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p> What aspects of your daily life are most impacted by CKD?</p> <p>Is there anything you do now that helps you cope with CKD?</p> </div>	<p>In your action plan, make sure each goal is a S.M.A.R.T. goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific: Make sure your goal is clear and precise. Avoid vague statements. • Measurable: Define how you will measure your progress or success. Use numbers or specific criteria. • Attainable: Ensure that your goal is realistic and achievable. Set yourself up for success. • Relevant: Make sure your goal is meaningful and aligns with your overall goals. • Time-bound: Set a specific timeframe for achieving your goal. <div data-bbox="1438 1023 1974 1315" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p> What S.M.A.R.T goals do you have in mind for managing your CKD?</p> <p>Is there anything you would like to do differently that we can make a plan for?</p> </div>

Topic	 If you have 5 minutes, say this:	 If you have 10 minutes, add this:	 If you have 15 minutes, also add this:
<p>Follow a kidney-friendly eating plan</p>	<p>Follow a healthy eating plan that can help your kidney damage from getting worse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you make any changes, talk to your doctor about an eating plan and what body weight would be healthiest for you. Kidney-friendly eating may look different depending on your stage of CKD. • Ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian. A registered dietitian is someone with special training in food and nutrition who can help you create and follow a kidney-friendly eating plan. • AKF's Kidney Kitchen Ask a Dietitian page can help you and your doctor find a dietitian near you. When you contact a dietitian, ask if they are in your health insurance plan's network of covered providers. <p>After you learn what eating plan is best for you, use resources to help you stay on track such as AKF's Kidney Kitchen®, a nutrition-focused website on the basics of healthy eating with kidney disease.</p>	<p>It is important to watch what you eat and drink because your kidneys cannot remove waste products from your body as well as they should. Use AKF's Working with a Dietitian guide to help prepare for your first visit with a dietitian. Your dietitian will help you create a kidney-friendly eating plan that includes the foods you enjoy.</p> <p>Your dietitian will help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the right types of fat, such as olive oil, to prevent weight gain and heart disease • Choose healthy carbohydrates (carbs) such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables – and how to avoid sugar and soft drinks • Eat the right amount of calories to give your body energy and stay at the best weight for you • Eat foods with less sodium (salt) to prevent kidney damage and high blood pressure • Control your portion sizes, such as by eating slowly and stopping when you are full 	<p>A kidney-friendly eating plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slows down damage to your kidneys by preventing certain minerals from building up in your body • Helps prevent or control high blood pressure and diabetes, which can keep kidney disease from getting worse • Helps you stay at a healthy weight and builds muscle <div data-bbox="1474 743 2003 1333" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: #fff;"> <p> What foods do you usually eat each day?</p> <p> If you are a medical professional, ask: Would you like a referral to see a dietitian to help you create an eating plan?</p> <p> If you are not a medical professional, ask: Would you like help with how to ask your doctor for a referral to a dietitian?</p> </div>

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<p>Other ways to keep your kidneys healthy or to prevent more damage</p>	<p>Stay active:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move your body each day for at least 30 minutes. You can do this by walking or doing an activity you enjoy like yoga or yard work. • For your safety, check with your doctor before you exercise to find out what is safe for you <div data-bbox="369 581 898 737" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p> What activities do you like to do that can help you be active for 30 minutes every day?</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quit smoking or using tobacco • Limit how much alcohol you drink: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 1 drink a day for females • No more than 2 drinks a day for males 	<p>Plan ahead if you are going to travel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pack kidney-friendly snacks and even entire meals for long flights or drives • Take all of your kidney medicines • Make a plan for doing dialysis, such as finding a dialysis center where you are going or shipping supplies ahead for home dialysis 	<p>Having CKD can also mean you need to get to doctor visits and dialysis appointments. There are options for transportation if that is an issue for you.</p> <div data-bbox="1480 444 2009 600" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p> Do you need any help with transportation to your doctor or dialysis appointments?</p> </div> <p>If you have challenges with transportation, there are options to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if your dialysis center offers free or low-cost transportation • The city or county you live in may offer transportation services, especially in rural areas • If you have Medicaid, you may be able to get transportation services covered • Ask your doctor to connect you with other resources in your community <p>You can find support services in your community with AKF's Community Resource Finder.</p>

Topic

Take charge of your health



If you have 5 minutes, say this:

Take your medicine:

- Always take your medicine as your doctor says

Visit your doctor for regular check-ups:

- This helps catch problems early. If CKD is found at an early stage, medicine and regular testing may help stop it from becoming more severe.
- Plan and prepare for your doctor visits by making a list of questions.

Keep track of your test results. This can help you track the health of your kidneys over time:

- These can include your blood pressure, cholesterol, urine (pee) and blood tests.

Know your treatment options:

- Ask your doctor which treatments may be an option for you.



If you have 10 minutes, add this:

Learn about your medicines:

- Know all your medicines and what they are for
- Talk to your doctor before starting or stopping new medicines, including vitamins and supplements because some can harm your kidneys

Know when to meet with a nephrologist (kidney doctor).

Depending on your stage of CKD, your doctor may refer you or recommend you see a nephrologist.

Learn what your test results mean. Urine and blood test results may include:

- eGFR (estimated glomerular filtration rate), which shows how well your kidneys still work to filter waste and fluid out of your blood
- Albumin-to-creatinine ratio (UACR), which shows how much protein is in your urine



If you have 15 minutes, also add this:

Plan ahead for your treatment options. Over time your kidneys may start to fail. If your kidneys fail, you will need dialysis or a kidney transplant. You can:

- Learn about the different types of dialysis on [AKF's dialysis page](#)
- Learn about the kidney transplant process on [AKF's kidney donation and transplant page](#)



If you are a medical professional, ask:

Do you have any questions about your medicines, treatment options or test results?

Do you keep track of the medicines you take and your test results?



If you are not a medical professional, ask:

Would you like help writing down questions for your doctor about your medicines, treatment options, or test results?

I can also help you decide how to keep track of the medicines you take.

Topic

Ask for support



If you have 5 minutes, say this:

Having CKD may mean you need to make big changes in your life. Many people struggle with these changes, and it is normal to have strong emotions. If you have stress, depression or anxiety from living with kidney disease, you are not alone.

Reach out to others and ask for help and support. You can:

- Build a support system of your family and friends
- Find a support group for people with CKD
- Use mental health resources, such as a mental health professional
- Learn more at [AKF's mental health and kidney disease page](#)



Do you have family or friends you feel comfortable asking for help or support?

Have you reached out to any support groups or others with CKD?



If you have 10 minutes, add this:

Mental health professionals, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and therapists, can help treat your mental health with therapy or medicines.

To find a mental health professional, you can:

- Ask your doctor for a referral or recommendation
- Ask your health insurance for a list of mental health professionals covered by your plan
- Ask a family member or friend for a recommendation
- Check the list of resources on [AKF's mental health and kidney disease page](#)



Would you like help with how to ask your doctor for a referral to a mental health professional?



If you have 15 minutes, also add this:

Let us use the time we have left to make a support action plan, such as:

- Make a list of people who can help, and what they can help with
- Review how you can teach your friends and family about CKD, so you can build a more understanding support system
- Make a list of support groups or mental health resources you can contact if you need help

