

Tips for Communicating with Your Kidney Care Team

It's easy to get confused when you're trying to talk with your kidney care team. Sometimes they use complicated, unfamiliar terms.

But being able to communicate effectively with your kidney care team can help you have some control over your health care. One way to help you communicate effectively is to take P.A.R.T.:

Prepare. Make a list of important questions or concerns, and bring these up at the beginning of your visit.

Ask. Ask questions regarding tests, treatments, and any follow-up steps that are necessary. Make sure you understand the doctor's answers. If you don't, ask until you do.

Repeat. Once you have gotten the information from your doctor, repeat some of the key points. This will help you make sure you heard correctly and give the doctor the chance to correct any misunderstandings.

Take Action. When your appointment is over, know what your next steps are. Make sure you understand what you need to do and ask for help if you don't.

You should keep in mind that there are lots of members of your kidney care team, and collectively they're able to help answer any questions you may have.

Support Groups and Resources

Each of these highly regarded organizations has an informative Web site and can be contacted by telephone toll free

- American Association of Kidney Patients at www.aakp.org ^[1] or 1-800-749-2257
- American Kidney Fund at www.kidneyfund.org ^[2] or 1-800-638-8299
- National Kidney Foundation at www.kidney.org ^[3] or 1-800-622-9010
- Renal Support Network at www.rsnhope.org ^[4] or 1-866-903-1728

Support Groups

There are a variety of resources across the country, in your area, and, of course, on the Internet. Typing "CKD support groups" into a search engine such as Google reveals over

95,000 sites. Consider contacting some of the support groups listed below:

- Renal Support Network at www.rsnhope.org [5] or 1-866-903-1728
- Nationwide listing of support groups, by state, at <https://aakp.org/support-groups/> [6]
- DaVita at www.davita.com/education/ckd-life/support/support-groups-for-people-living-with-kidney-disease [7] or 1-800-244-0680

Be a Part of Your Kidney Care Team

Communicating Effectively with Your Kidney Care Team

You go to dialysis and stay for the entire session. You take your medication as directed by your doctor. You follow your kidney care team's instructions. Is there anything else you can do to manage your condition?

There is. Learn to talk and work with your kidney care team so you understand their expectations and they understand yours.

Communicating with your kidney care team is more than just listening to them. It's asking questions, letting them know your thoughts, and taking action. Be specific when talking with your kidney care team and

- Write down your most important questions or concerns, and ask them at the beginning of your visit
- Focus your questions on your tests, treatments, and any follow-up steps. Make sure you understand the health care provider's answers

By asking for specifics, you can convey the information you want to get across and get the answers you are looking for.

Doing your part can help you get the most from your relationship with your kidney care team. *Teamwork is the name of the game!*

Sharing Important Information with Your Kidney Care Team

It may feel awkward to share some things with your kidney care team, but telling them any relevant medical information you have may help them design a more effective treatment plan for you.

Each member of your kidney care team handles different areas of your treatment, so you have plenty of people who can address your needs.

- Taking medications. If you have problems taking your medications as directed, tell your doctor or nurse and let him or her know why
- Trouble following diet. If you have difficulty following a kidney-friendly diet, tell your renal dietitian so that he or she can help you find foods that work for you

- Getting to dialysis. If you're having a hard time making it to all of your dialysis appointments at the clinic, talk to your social worker about making other arrangements for transportation

Also bring a list of the medications you are currently taking, and a list of the physicians you've seen since your last appointment and why. Make sure to tell your kidney care team about your medical history.

Talking to Your Kidney Care Team About Changes in Treatment

If you or your kidney care team may feel that your current treatment plan isn't working well enough. This is when being able to talk openly and honestly to your doctor can benefit you.

- Ask about all treatment options. Learn about the risks and benefits of each treatment option and understand any consequences of not managing your condition to help find the treatment that works for you
- Share your thoughts and concerns. Your kidney care team won't be able to help you if you don't tell them what's bothering you. For example, if you are hesitant to try a new medication due to side effects, **speak up**

Be sure to keep your doctor informed as to how you are feeling. Remember that you and your kidney care team need to communicate in order to get a treatment that works for you.

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Links

[1] <http://www.aakp.org/>

[2] <http://www.kidneyfund.org/>

[3] <http://www.kidney.org/>

[4] <http://www.rsnhope.org/>

[5] <http://www.rsnhope.org>

[6] <https://aakp.org/support-groups/>

[7] <https://www.davita.com/education/ckd-life/support/support-groups-for-people-living-with-kidney-disease>