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Get Involved

The following section will provide tips on becoming more active in your own healthcare.

Lab Values

Health Information Trackers

Lab Values

You should have your lab work done on a regular basis to help keep track of your progress. You may be tested for the following at different times:

- Kidney function
- Phosphorus
- Potassium
- Blood pressure
- Diabetes control
- Anemia
- Bone health
- Nutrition

Depending on what your doctor wants to do and any other conditions you may have, he or she may request other labs.

Consider making a chart for all your lab values, including phosphorus, or ask your nurse or renal dietitian if he or she has a chart you can use. It can help you follow your progress.

Medication Schedule
You?re not alone in taking several kinds of medicine. Sometimes, it can be tough to keep track of them all. In fact, a lot of patients on dialysis have this trouble.

If you do follow your medication schedule, congratulations! Keep up the good work. But if you?re missing doses because you sometimes forget, try these tips:

Use a watch or cell phone with an alarm to remind you to take your medications

Try using a pill organizer

Keep your medicine in a place where you can see it ? but where children can?t reach

Use a calendar or planner to check off your medications as you take them each day

Prepare for Appointments

A notebook may be the most valuable tool you can have to help track your treatment plan. Keep a notebook nearby so you can write down any instructions or information the doctor or renal care team gives you, as well as any questions you may have.

Use a notebook to track your phosphorus and other lab values as well as to keep a list of your medical records, important phone numbers, and medications.

It may help to focus your questions in particular areas. For example, medication, nutrition, and symptoms. But just as important as asking questions is making sure you understand the answers. You or a loved one should write down the information your doctor presented, and read it back to the doctor to make sure it?s correct.

Make the notebook work for you, and keep it handy. You?ll feel reassured by having everything you need.

Diet Tracking

Food Diary

A food diary is an easy way to monitor the foods and liquids in your diet. The diary can help you identify trouble spots and make quick fixes.

Your renal dietitian can help you get a food diary or you can check for one online.

Food labels can help you with your food diary and help you choose healthier, kidney-friendly foods. Talk to your renal dietitian about what to look for before you shop.

Since imbalances of minerals such as phosphorus and potassium are a concern for patients on dialysis, ask your renal dietitian how many milligrams (mg) of these minerals you should have each day. Remember that ?percent daily values? on products are for someone without kidney disease, so your needs may differ. Generally, however,

- A food is low in phosphorus if it has fewer than 50 mg (or less than 5%)
- A food is high in phosphorus if it has more than 150 mg (or greater than 15%)
- A food is low in potassium if it has fewer than 100 mg (or less than 3%)
- A food is high in potassium if it has more than 200 mg (or greater than 6%)

If a food label doesn?t list phosphorus or potassium, it doesn?t mean they aren?t in there. Talk to your renal dietitian if you?re unsure.

Before making any changes to your diet, please talk with your doctor or renal dietitian.

Tips for Eating Out

You can stick with a kidney-friendly diet and still enjoy dining out. The key is to plan ahead. You may have to cut back on fluids, sodium, potassium, and phosphorus in your other meals the day you?re eating out.

- Tell your server, ?No salt, please?
- Order sauces served on the side
- Don?t forget to bring your medications with you and take them as directed

Join Patient Organizations

Organizations That Can Help

There are a number of patient organizations, such as Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC), to help those living with chronic kidney disease (CKD).

Dialysis Patient Citizens
As a patient-led nationwide organization, DPC?s mission is to improve ?dialysis patients? quality of life by developing awareness of dialysis issues, advocating for dialysis patients, improving the partnership between patients and caregivers, and promoting favorable public policy.? Visit www.dialysispatients.org [1] or call 1-866-877-4242 for more information.

Here are other groups and organizations you may be able to get involved with:

- American Association of Kidney Patients at www.aakp.org [2]or 1-800-749-2257
- Renal Support Network at www.rsnhope.org [3] or 1-866-903-1728
- The American Kidney Fund at www.kidneyfund.org [4] or 1-800-638-8299
- National Kidney Foundation at www.kidney.org [5] or 1-800-622-9010
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at www2.niddk.nih.gov [6] or 301-496-3583
- Renal Physicians Association. Keeping Kidney Patients Safe at www.kidneypatientsafety.org [7] or 1-301-468-3515
- The National Forum of End Stage Renal Disease Networks at www.esrdnetworks.org [8] or 1-804-418-7990

These are just a few organizations that offer information, education, and support. Be sure to share this information with your family and friends, and even at the dialysis clinic.

(37-1698796). Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by the law.

Source URL: http://www.dpcedcenter.org/classroom/take-active-role-your-treatment/get-involved

Links
[1] http://www.dialysispatients.org/
[2] http://www.dpcedcenter.org/book/export/html/116
[3] http://www.rsnhope.org/
[4] http://www.kidneyfund.org/
[5] http://www.kidney.org/
[6] http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/
[7] http://www.kidneypatientsafety.org/
[8] http://www.esrdnetworks.org/