

ESRD Patient News[©]

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Why We Do What We Do

At every age, patients with ESRD on dialysis have significantly increased mortality when compared with non-dialysis patients and individuals without kidney disease. At age 60, a healthy person can expect to live for more than 20 years. However, the life expectancy of a patient aged 60 who is starting hemodialysis is closer to 4 years. Among patients aged 65 or older who have ESRD, mortality rates are 6 times higher than in the general population.

Home dialysis has particular advantages especially during high risk seasons, less exposure to germs; receive dialysis on the scheduled cadence; and no need to rely on transportation to get dialysis. We know that receiving treatment as prescribed increases quality of life, life expectancy, decreases hospitalizations and adverse events.

We exist to help reduce these mortality figures and increase use of tools and technology that achieve that goal. This issue adds more tools to your toolbox.

Don't forget to [check our website](#) regularly for updates and new programs.



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ESRD Patient News[©], a publication of The Carlisle-Williams Foundation, Inc, informs our readers of issues important to management and understanding of their disease and furthers the Foundation's mission of providing hope and support to ESRD patients. We welcome and encourage feedback. ["Contact Us"](#) on the website. Thank you!

The Benefits of Exercise on Dialysis

Many patients fear that physical exertion will worsen their condition or damage their access site. While caution is necessary, inactivity can actually lead to muscle wasting and reduced cardiovascular health. Integrating exercise on dialysis offers physiological and psychological benefits that can transform a patient's daily experience.

Combat Muscle Atrophy and Weakness - Kidney disease can lead to a loss of muscle mass which can make simple tasks like climbing stairs or carrying groceries difficult. Regular movement helps maintain muscle tone and functional strength.

Improve Endurance – Consistent activity helps your muscles use oxygen more efficiently, reducing the feeling of breathlessness during daily tasks.

Enhance Mobility – Strengthening the muscles around your joints improves balance and reduces the risk of falls, a common concern for dialysis patients.

Boost Cardiovascular Health - Heart disease is a major risk factor for individuals with kidney issues. Fitness for dialysis patients focuses heavily on cardiovascular protection.

Blood Pressure Regulation – Moderate exercise helps lower blood pressure, reducing the strain on your heart and blood vessels.

Mental and Emotional Well-Being - Dialysis can be mentally taxing. Exercise releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Staying active with kidney disease has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, providing a constructive outlet for stress.

Getting Started Safely

First, approach exercise with a safety-first mindset. The goal is to enhance your health, not to exhaust your reserves.

Consult Your Medical Team

Never start a new exercise regimen without approval from your nephrologist. If you are looking for a “dialysis doctor near me” to discuss your options, ensure you choose a provider who takes a holistic approach to your care. Your doctor will evaluate your current physical condition, the stability of your dialysis access site, and your overall heart health.

“Start Low, Go Slow” Approach

For many patients, especially those who have been sedentary, starting slowly is crucial.

Duration – Begin with 5 to 10 minutes of activity per session. Gradually increase this time as your stamina improves.

Intensity – Use the “talk test” to gauge intensity. You should be able to carry on a conversation while exercising. If you are gasping for breath, the intensity is too high.

Exercise Strategies

You do not need a gym membership or heavy equipment. The best activities are those that are low-impact and sustainable.

Walking – perhaps the safest and most accessible form of exercise. It requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere. Walking around your neighborhood or walking on a treadmill, this simple activity provides excellent cardiovascular benefits.

Cycling- Stationary cycling is highly recommended for dialysis patients. In some progressive clinics, patients are even

encouraged to use light stationary pedals during the first half of their dialysis treatment. This can help reduce cramping and improve dialysis efficiency by increasing blood flow.

Resistance Training - Using light weights or resistance bands helps build muscle without placing extra stress on the joints.

Modifications – Use light resistance bands to perform seated rows or leg presses.

Safety – Avoid lifting heavy weights, especially with the arm that has the vascular access (fistula or graft).

Protect Your Access Site – Your AV fistula, graft, or catheter is your lifeline and must be protected from trauma and excessive pressure.

Avoid Constriction – Do not wear tight clothing or bands over the access site while exercising.

Limit Heavy Lifting – Most doctors recommend not lifting heavy weights with the access arm. Focus on high repetitions with very low weight instead.

Monitor for Changes – After exercising, check the thrill (vibration) of your fistula. If there is any change, pain, or bleeding, contact your dialysis doctor immediately.

Avoid Submersion – Swimming is generally not recommended for patients with catheters due to infection risk.

Secure the Line – Ensure the catheter is well-secured to prevent tugging or dislodgement during movement.

When to Exercise: Timing Matters

Non-Dialysis days are typically the best days for a more structured workout. You are likely to have more energy and better fluid balance.

On dialysis days some patients feel energized immediately after treatment, while others feel drained (the “dialysis washout”).

Before treatment, light exercise can be beneficial.

During treatment, light pedaling during the first hour or two can be safe under supervision.

After treatment, avoid intense exercise immediately after a session, as you may be dehydrated or have electrolyte imbalances.

Know When to Stop

While fitness for dialysis patients is beneficial, there are warning signs that necessitate an immediate halt to activity. Stop exercising and seek medical help if you experience:

- Chest pain or pressure
- Irregular heartbeat or palpitations
- Severe shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pain in your access arm
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

Exercising on dialysis is not just about physical strength; it is about resilience. By following safety guidelines and working closely with your healthcare team, you can enjoy the benefits of staying active with kidney disease.

<https://doralhw.org/exercise-on-dialysis-staying-active-while-staying-safe/>

Mindfulness Quick Tip

Focus on the Good

Instead of wishing things were different, notice what is good. You will be surprised by the change in mood and perspective.

Working While on Dialysis - Resources and Information

Dialysis does not automatically mean the end of your job or your career plans. For many people, treatment and work can fit together when the schedule is planned carefully and the right dialysis option is chosen. The goal is not to pretend dialysis is easy. The goal is to be realistic about the time and energy it takes, then design a plan that protects both your health and your livelihood.

Together with your nephrologist and care team, review your medical needs, your type of work, and your transportation and family responsibilities, then decide which treatment option may give you the most flexibility. With the increasing availability of home dialysis options, remaining employed while on dialysis has become easier.

Dialysis Schedules That Fit Around Your Workday

Working while on dialysis starts with a schedule that fits real life. Choose treatment times that work around your job, not jobs that work around your treatment. Home hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis can often be done in the evening, early morning, or overnight, so you can stay on your treatment plan and still show up for your shift. Your care team will walk you through different schedule options, talk about commute time and energy levels, and help you choose a plan that supports both your health and your paycheck.

Support For Conversations With Your Employer

You do not have to figure out work conversations on your own. Your social workers and nurses should be available to

help think through how and when to talk with a supervisor or human resources about dialysis. That can include simple schedule adjustments, use of sick time or FMLA leave, and reasonable accommodations such as a place to store supplies if needed.

Focus on what you feel comfortable sharing, then explain dialysis in plain language so your employer understands that with the right plan in place, you can keep working safely and reliably.

Dialysis patients fall under the ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act – which requires reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities so that they can continue to work. For dialysis, this could include remote work, a change in your shift, a room where you can perform your dialysis.

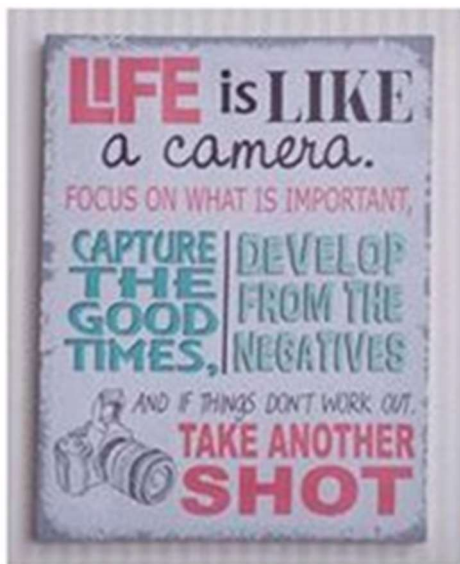
Additionally, if you do regular in-center hemodialysis, a morning or evening shift might be better to accommodate your work schedule. I went Monday, Wednesday, Friday first shift and started work when I got back home. It was an arrangement I was able to work out with my manager that allowed me to continue working. On non-dialysis days, I went in to the office.

For more information on work and dialysis, visit these resources.

<https://www.satellitehealthcare.com/living-with-dialysis/work-and-dialysis/>

<https://www.usrenalcare.com/healthy-living/working-while-on-dialysis/>

<https://www.freseniuskidneycare.com/thriving-on-dialysis/staying-active/staying-employed>



Mindfulness – Another Tool in Your Wellbeing Toolkit

Mindfulness-based treatments have been shown to reduce anxiety and depression, can lower blood pressure and improve sleep. It may even help people cope with pain.

“For many chronic illnesses, mindfulness meditation seems to improve quality of life and reduce mental health symptoms,” says Dr. Zev Schuman-Olivier of Harvard University.

One of the first mindfulness-based therapies was used for depression. Mindfulness appears to help with depression in two ways. First, it helps you develop the ability to stay grounded in the present, explains Dr. Sona Dimidjian of the University of Colorado Boulder.

With depression, “your attention can get hijacked into the past or future,” she explains. You spend time focusing on past negative experiences or worrying about things to come.

Second, mindfulness can help you “de-center” from such thoughts. “It’s like being able to sit on the riverbank and watch thoughts floating by like leaves on a stream,” Dimidjian says. “Developing the skill of mindfulness can help stop you from being pulled into any one thought and carried down the stream.”

Developing Healthy Habits

Being mindful may also help you make healthier choices. Loucks’s team at Brown created an eight-week mindfulness program for people with high blood pressure.

They studied whether the program increased participants’ awareness of their habits. This included how they ate. The study found that participants chose a healthier diet after taking the course.

You can bring mindfulness to your eating habits, too. ***This is especially important to dialysis patients because of the renal diet.*** Studies suggest that it can help reduce binge eating and emotional eating. Paying closer attention to your body can help you notice signals that you’re full and help you better enjoy your food.

This body awareness seems to be one part of how mindfulness helps people adopt healthier habits. If you’ve just eaten a jelly donut, you may be more likely to notice an unpleasant sugar crash, Loucks explains. Remembering this can help you to make better food choices in the future.

This goes for positive feelings too. “With physical activity, just about everybody feels better afterwards. So, with mindfulness training we’re aware of it improving our

mood, and then we can use that reward to actually train ourselves,” Loucks says.

Mindfulness may also help with setting a goal. “We can place our mind on being more active or eating more fruits and vegetables. And if we place our intention there, it may be more likely that we’re going to carry through and make it happen,” Loucks explains.

Learning To Be Mindful

If you want to practice mindfulness, experts suggest looking for resources from medical schools and universities. Check to see if they’re evidence-based.

You can use an evidence-based app if you want more choice over when and where you practice your mindfulness. Schuman-Olivier says. You can also try finding a teacher or someone with the skills to guide you in mindfulness training.

And just like any skill, mindfulness takes practice. “Just because something is simple, doesn’t mean that it’s easy,” Dimidjian says.

Mental training can take time and dedication. Aim for a few minutes of mindfulness each day to start.

Body Scan Meditation

A body scan meditation can be a good way to connect with your body. It helps you become aware of how your body feels as you mentally scan from head to toe.

- Start in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Take several deep breaths. Then, notice your feet. How do they feel?
- Let your scan travel up your body—legs, stomach, arms, hands, neck, and finally, head. Notice any sensations or

discomfort. Try not to change or judge these feelings—you’re simply checking in.

Doing body scans on a regular basis can help increase mindfulness.

<https://www.sutterhealth.org/health/mindfulness-as-medicine>

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/06/mindfulness-your-health>

Positive Affirmations for You to Try

Affirmations help your brain focus on what matters most so you don’t feel overwhelmed by stress and you grow more emotionally resilient. They have been proven to improve overall wellbeing, reduce anxiety and help you see yourself in a more positive light so you can see others in a more positive light.

Here are a few for you to try.

My feelings are designed to communicate needs that I may not notice otherwise. I can reflect on them with curiosity instead of shame and discover new pathways to brighter days.

I have the power to practice daily routines that nourish my physical and mental health. As I do so, I won’t forget that rest, connection, and stillness are pivotal pieces of those routines. .

My creativity is fueled by rest and connectedness. I have the capacity to surprise myself, and my imagination deserves space to play.

And don’t forget to take advantage of the online resources we have available – www.the-carlisle-williams-foundation.org/emotional-resources.