



*TIPS* for  
— **LIVING A** —  
*GOOD LIFE*  
— **IF YOU HAVE** —  
*Kidney Disease*

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## *Tips for Living a Good Life if You Have Kidney Disease*

Life can be a bit more complicated when you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), but you should still be able to enjoy your life.

Take things slowly – one step at a time, one day at a time, and realize that thousands of others are also dealing with CKD. Although it may now seem like one of the most trying times in your life, there is no reason that you can't live your life as a CKD patient.

CKD is not ESRD. End Stage Renal Disease or ESRD is very severe and complicated and you should be under a doctor's supervision.

Listed here are a number of recommendations – from sources that include the American Kidney Fund and the National Kidney Foundation – for living a good life if you have chronic kidney disease.

A new kidney disease patient can benefit from the knowledge of experts and the advice of other patients who have been managing chronic kidney disease for years. Included below are recommendations for:

1. Educating yourself about kidney disease
2. Dealing with healthcare providers
3. Diet and exercise
4. Maintaining a positive outlook
5. Knowing your rights as a kidney disease patient





## Recommendations for Educating Yourself About Kidney Disease



Knowledge is power, and as you learn more about CKD, any feelings of fear or helplessness will begin to fade.

When you have CKD, you must be proactive about educating yourself. While there's plenty of information about CKD online, that information may not always be accurate, so you need to stick with trustworthy sources like these:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
2. National Kidney Foundation
3. American Kidney Fund
4. American Association of Kidney Patients
5. American Society of Nephrology

Several pharmaceutical companies also offer informative material online. Your doctor, hospital, or clinic may have a medical library, and one of your local hospitals may even sponsor kidney disease education classes.

Ask your healthcare providers plenty of questions, and don't stop asking questions until you are satisfied with the answers. Educating yourself – as well as treating yourself – is part of the healthcare provider's job, and these professionals should be able to answer all of your questions or direct you to a healthcare professional who can.

You should also conduct some of your own research regarding medical insurance and the financial resources that may be available to you as a CKD patient.





You should also ask your healthcare provider what is the cause of your kidney disease and the progression of your KD. Find out the primary and secondary risk factors of CKD.

Finally, you never know what you might learn from someone who has already been through what you are going through. The American Association of Kidney Patients has support groups in almost every state, and your doctor or hospital may know about a CKD support group near you.

## ***Recommendations for Dealing With Healthcare Providers***

Unfortunately, there's no magic pill or potion that cures chronic kidney disease. For the most part, the prescriptions you are given will be aimed at helping you feel healthier and avoiding foreseeable medical problems. Stopping the progression of CKD is the goal.

You really must follow your doctor's orders and take your prescribed drugs according to their directions. You may need to think up some creative ways to remind yourself when to take your medicines.

Remember that your healthcare providers should be doing everything they can to help you. Actually, you may have to help them. Review your cards, ask questions and be aware of your own care.

Doctors, in particular, are usually busy and may not always be easy to talk to, so it may help to write out your questions in advance and take notes during your discussions. Also, remember that the doctor cannot read your mind, so don't hesitate to speak up about any of your concerns.





Address all your symptoms, as early detection can help prevent the progression of kidney disease to kidney failure.

If for any reason you believe that a healthcare provider has been careless or negligent regarding your treatment, you may have a legal claim for medical malpractice. Keep reading, and you'll learn the facts about your legal rights as a CKD patient.

## Recommendations for Diet



When you're a CKD patient, it can seem like everyone has diet and exercise advice for you. However, following a kidney-friendly diet is imperative to staying healthy and protecting your kidneys from further deterioration.

Studies show that in the early stages of CKD, limiting protein and phosphorus can help prolong kidney function. Protein can be a problem for some people with CKD. You have to have it, but CKD patients have

to limit their protein intake.

Keeping your blood pressure and blood sugar under control is also essential, as well as limiting sodium and potassium. A patient with kidney disease is generally given a diet prescription to make sure that his or her nutritional needs are met.

Monitoring and limiting what you eat and drink will help you considerably. Learning how your diet interacts with your kidneys can be tremendously helpful and empowering.





Learn to read and understand food labels. In addition, patients with kidney disease should not smoke. Smoking slows the blood flow to your kidneys, causing damage.

Talk to your doctor and try to work with a renal dietitian who can help you plan the diet that is best for you. The details of your personal diet plan will depend on the stage of your kidney disease, your body size, and your general overall health. Maintaining the weight recommended by your doctor will also help you manage your kidney disease.

## *Recommendations for Exercise*

Staying active can help you stay healthy. The right exercise routine can help you maintain a healthy weight and blood sugar level, lower your blood pressure, and improve your heart and lungs.



Ideally, you should exercise for at least half-an-hour, five days a week, but you'll probably need to start slowly and do a little more each day. Don't hurt yourself – walking, bicycling, and even dancing are all good exercise. You don't have to go to a gym and lift weights (or spend money).

However, because every CKD patient is a unique individual, you must consult with your doctor before you begin any exercise regimen. Some exercises may not be safe for some patients, and others may need to limit their activity rather than trying to “do more.”





## Recommendations for Maintaining a Positive Outlook



Feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, or depression are normal when you first learn that you have CKD. You might even experience all of those feelings simultaneously. It takes time to adjust.

Depression is not at all unusual when a life change happens that you didn't ask for and don't want. You might feel helpless, but if you can't shake that feeling, you may want to seek some help and do what it takes to feel better. Dealing with

depression usually involves:

1. **Counseling:** A counselor or therapist will help you put CKD into perspective. Your life is vast, and CKD is only one part of it. Ask your doctor to refer you to a good counselor. Seek emotional support.
2. **Medications:** A number of drugs can help to ease depression, but you'll need to talk to your doctor. As a CKD patient, you won't be able to take advantage of some of those drugs, so a doctor can guide you in the right direction.
3. **Exercise:** For mild to moderate depression, exercise may be the best medicine, but once again, you should consult with your doctor before you begin any exercise routine.





## *What Are Your Rights as a CKD Patient?*

As mentioned above, the majority of healthcare providers are conscientiously doing everything they can for their patients, but if you believe that a medical professional has been careless or negligent while providing your treatment, you may have a medical malpractice claim.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, about 26 million patients in the United States are dealing with chronic kidney disease. Some of these patients may experience medical malpractice.

Medical malpractice is a violation of the “reasonable standard of care” that is provided by most healthcare professionals which cause a permanent injury. When you are a CKD patient, it may be genuinely difficult to know whether or not you are a victim, but the danger is permanent in nature.

If you were misdiagnosed, your tests results were misinterpreted, or you were prescribed the wrong medication, you may be a victim of medical malpractice. Errors committed by a surgeon or negligence on the part of a kidney dialysis provider may also constitute medical malpractice.

If you have been injured by a healthcare provider's negligence, or if your health deteriorated rather than improved after you obtained medical treatment, you should speak immediately with an experienced medical malpractice attorney.

A good medical malpractice lawyer will protect your rights and explain how the law applies in your own case. You may be able to recover compensation for your additional medical expenses, for any lost income, and for your personal pain and suffering.





## *A Good Life Can Be Yours – Even With Chronic Kidney Disease*

If you adhere to the recommendations listed above, you'll find that life – even with chronic kidney disease – can be good. Keep these recommendations in mind and review them occasionally if you have CKD.

As you adjust to life with chronic kidney disease, managing the disease will become a habit rather than a burden. For the overwhelming majority of CKD patients, there is no reason why you cannot live a good life if your CKD is caught early enough, End Stage Renal Disease or ESRD is a different story. If you have ESRD and you were never told you have CKD, you should contact a professional medical malpractice attorney who specializes in failure to diagnose kidney disease cases. Help may be available.



Questions? Call Kurzban Kurzban Tetzeli  
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