



## Pocket Guide to Managing Kidney Disease

A tool to help patients and caregivers have more effective dialogue with their healthcare teams.

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@kidneypatient



@kidneypatients

What is the cause of my kidney disease? Is it hereditary?

What can I do to slow/stop the progression of kidney loss?

What is my current level of kidney function (GFR) and what stage of CKD does this put me in?

Is my stage of kidney disease stable or will it progress?

What do I need to do right now to slow/prevent progression and to stop future complications (such as heart disease or bone disease)?

**5 KEY**  
questions  
to ask your  
doctor/medical  
specialist

5

1

4

2

3

- Do I need to see a kidney doctor (nephrologist)?
- Do I have kidney damage, or is the elevated creatinine or estimated GFR simply associated with aging or my body size?
- How much protein do I have in my urine and should I take medication to reduce it, even if it's not a lot?
- What is my blood pressure? If I need medication, are you prescribing medication that will help preserve kidney function?
- Is my uric acid level high and should I take medication, even if I don't have gout (a form of inflammatory arthritis caused by high uric acid level)?
- If my kidney disease progresses, do I need to make any changes to my diet?
- Show me a plot of how my GFR is stable or declining.

All of the previous questions, plus:

- If my kidney function has been declining, I would like to begin my education about treatment options, including dialysis access options, dialysis options and kidney transplantation (pre-emptive, living organ donor and deceased organ donor).
- What is my Vitamin D level and do I need to be on supplements?
- Is my parathyroid hormone level increasing? If so, what do we need to do?
- Is my blood pressure under control?
- Do I need a diuretic?
- Am I becoming anemic (not producing enough red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body)?

- I want to bring my family in for education about my treatment options for kidney failure. It is my understanding that a transplant is typically the best treatment option. What can we do now to determine if I can receive a transplant?
- Is a pre-emptive transplant (transplant occurring before dialysis is ever started) an option for me? When should we start the transplant evaluation?
- disease, what are we doing to decrease the risk associated with LV disease?
- Is it time for me to be on Vitamin D medication, phosphorous binders and anemia medication?
- Is my blood pressure still under control?
- Based on my kidney function, when do you believe dialysis or a transplant will be needed?
- If I am not feeling sexual/intimate,

- I want to schedule venous mapping and have an AV fistula access placed in the event I will need dialysis.
- Do I have signs/symptoms of left ventricular (LV) disease? Do we need to schedule an echocardiogram? If I have LV

what can be done to help?

- If I am feeling symptoms of depression, what can be done to help?
- Show me a plot of how my GFR is stable or declining? At the current rate of progression, when might dialysis or a transplant be needed?

Stages of CKD	GFR*	% of Kidney Function**
CKD Stage 1: Normal kidney function	90 or higher	90 – 100%
CKD Stage 2: Mild loss of kidney function	89 – 60	89 – 60%
CKD Stage 3a: Mild to moderate loss of kidney function	59 – 45	59 – 45%
CKD Stage 3b: Moderate to severe loss of kidney function	44 – 30	44 – 30%
CKD Stage 4: Severe loss of kidney function	29 – 15	29 – 15%
CKD Stage 5: Kidney failure	Less than 15	Less than 15%

\*The GFR number indicates how much kidney function is remaining. As kidney disease worsens, the GFR number (and percentage of kidney function) goes down. \*\*Your GFR will tell you an approximate percentage of kidney function, but your doctor will need to check the amount of albumin (protein) in your urine as well.

- Is my body retaining too much fluid?
- Is my AV fistula access suitable for use now?
- I have certain symptoms such as itching, shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, decreased appetite, change in bowel function, headaches and metallic taste in my mouth. What can be done to help this?
- When do we start the agreed upon kidney treatment (transplantation, home hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis or in-center hemodialysis)? Can I visit a dialysis center? Can I change treatment options?
- Am I doing everything I can, as a patient, to take care of my health? Have you as my doctor, done everything to assure I'm receiving the best care possible?



American Association  
of Kidney Patients

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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