

# EVERY PATIENT SAFE

*A National Infection Prevention Campaign for Kidney Patients*



## Patient Profile: Fiona McKinney – A Champion for Infection Prevention in Dialysis



As part of AAKP's Every Patient Safe campaign, which aims to protect the health and safety of vulnerable kidney patients across the country, we are proud to spotlight the story of AAKP Ambassador Fiona McKinney, a long-time dialysis patient and passionate advocate for infection prevention. With 17 years of dialysis experience, Fiona has learned firsthand the importance of cleanliness, vigilance, and speaking up to help reduce the risk of serious infections, including healthcare-acquired infections (HAIs) and catheter-related bloodstream infections (CRBSIs).

### A Personal Commitment to Safety

For Fiona, infection prevention starts before she even sits down for treatment. "Before each dialysis session, I clean my fistula area with soap and water, then wipe it with an alcohol pad," she said. "I always wear latex gloves when inserting the needles and make sure the staff uses clean gloves too."

Fiona pays close attention to her surroundings during every treatment. She checks to ensure all needles and equipment are sealed and sterile and keeps her access covered when not in use. "It's these simple habits that give me peace of mind and help reduce my risk."

### Engaged and Educated

Over the years, Fiona has received multiple handouts and flyers from her care team about infection prevention and protocols in the dialysis clinic. She believes education plays a key role in empowering patients and protecting their lives. "Patients need to know what to expect from the staff and that it's okay to ask questions," she says. "Flyers are great, but in-person communication goes a long way, especially for people who don't feel comfortable reading or speaking up."

She recommends that dialysis facilities post clear educational materials explaining how they sanitize stations and protect patients from infection. "After each treatment, I always see the staff wipe down machines with bleach, and that reassures me," she explains. "All clinics should follow the same visible, consistent cleaning routine."

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## Speaking Up: Protect Yourself and Others

Fiona is not afraid to raise concerns if she sees something that could put patient safety at risk. She has spoken up when staff used non-sterile materials or failed to change gloves between patients, both of which increase infection risk. One time, a freelance nurse used unsterile gauze, which led to swelling in Fiona's arm. "I made sure to bring it up at my next treatment," she says.

Fiona knows that speaking up isn't always easy, especially for newer patients. "At first, I was shy about it," she admits. "But over time, I've grown more confident. Most staff are grateful when you say something – it helps everyone."

Her message to fellow patients? "Learn what proper hand hygiene looks like. Ask questions. If something seems off, say something. It's your body – you have every right to protect it."

Fiona sees safety as a shared responsibility between patients, care partners, and dialysis staff. She encourages patients to report issues not only to protect themselves and their lives, but also to help protect others. "I've sent emails to the charge nurse before when something didn't feel right. You don't always have to make a scene; there are lots of respectful ways to raise concerns."

She also encourages care partners to speak up and be advocates, especially if their loved one doesn't feel confident or comfortable doing so.

## Looking Ahead

As the Every Patient Safe campaign continues, Fiona hopes to see even more educational resources and open conversations around infection prevention. She believes accessible, routine education, through flyers, conversations, or digital media, will help every patient better understand their role and their rights when it comes to safety.

"The more we know, the more we can protect ourselves," she says. "Infection prevention isn't just something for staff to worry about – it's a partnership."

## About Every Patient Safe:

Launched in June 2024 as part of National Safety Month, AAKP's Every Patient Safe campaign raises awareness about the unique safety risks faced by kidney patients and transplant recipients. It aims to equip patients, and their care partners, with the tools, education, and confidence they need to advocate for their safety.

Learn more and access infection prevention tools by visiting <https://bit.ly/EveryPatientSafe>. You can also access emergency preparedness resources, also a feature of AAKP's Every Patient Safe campaign at <https://bit.ly/AAKPEmergencyPreparedness>.