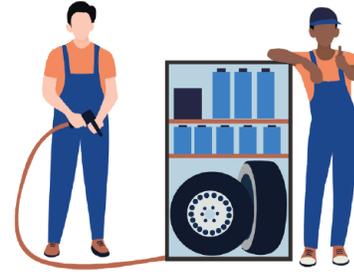


My Self-management Job

Welcome! By the end of this course, you will know:

1. What self-management is and why it matters.
2. How choices you make at home affect your health.
3. Key things you must learn to self-manage.
4. How to choose a treatment that fits your life and values.



You are Not Alone

Each year, more than 100,000 people learn that their kidneys have failed. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) may progress slowly or quickly. You may not have even known you had it. Kidney failure may be the end of your kidneys—but it is not the end of you! You can still have goals and dreams. If you make good choices, you may still have the energy to:



- Finish school
- Keep your job
- Care for loved ones
- Have pets
- Enjoy hobbies
- Eat good food
- Travel
- So much more!

Your Job as a Patient is to Self-manage

Self-management is the best way to keep control over your life and health. Manage your kidney disease by taking good care of yourself each day. There is no cure for CKD. That means it does not go away. But, there is hope. You can treat and manage it. You can still live a good life.

Kidney Failure

Kidneys work 24/7. When they fail, waste builds up in the body. This is called uremia. If this happens:

You may Feel...

- Tired
- Foggy
- Sick to your stomach
- Itchy
- Short of breath

You may have...

- Headaches
- No appetite
- A bad taste in your mouth
- Weight loss
- Swelling

Treatment helps control these symptoms. But, treatment only works when you get enough of it—and do your part to manage your disease the rest of the time.

Time Matters. Healthy kidneys work 168 hours a week. Dialysis can replace only a small part of kidney function. So, each minute of dialysis counts. More time can turn back the clock and help you feel more like you did when your kidneys still worked well. YOU choose:

- What you eat
- When to speak up
- How you care for your body
- What you drink
- How you cope
- If you take your meds

This is self-management in action.

Six Steps for Self-managing

1. Take Meds. Meds work only if you take them. Set alarms. Get into a routine with your meds so you can feel your best. Ask a pharmacist:

- What is this for?
- When do I take it?
- Do I take it with food?
- Are there side effects?
- Does it interact with my other meds?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?

Write the Answers Down. Keep an up-to-date med list on your phone. For each med, include the name, the dose, and how often you take it.

2. **Eat Well.** Kidney failure can cause a loss of appetite. But, you still need energy. You need enough calories to avoid malnutrition. Eating well can lower your risk of infection and hospital stays. If you feel too sick to eat, or food tastes bad, tell your doctor.
3. **Watch Fluid.** Many people on in-center hemodialysis HD have fluid limits. Fluid is anything liquid at room temp. Having too much can make it hard to breathe. How? Having to remove a lot of extra fluid can cause dizziness, headaches, cramps, and even fainting.
4. **Get ALL of Your Treatment.** Your blood is cleaned only while you get your treatment. So, you can still have symptoms of kidney failure. More dialysis replaces more kidney function. This means you can feel a lot better. If treatment symptoms are a problem for you, talk to your care team.
5. **Your Access is Your Lifeline.** Learn how to **look, listen, feel** it each day. Tell your care team if there are changes. Speak up right away if you see signs of infection like:
 - Redness
 - Warmth
 - Pus or drainage
 - Rash or itching
 - Swelling
 - Pain
 - Fever
6. **Move Your Body.** Even light exercise helps you stay active. Walking, stretching or light weights can help boost your energy and mood. Some people try yoga or tai chi. Start slow and gentle. Ask your team what might work best for you.



Choose a Treatment that Works for YOU

There is no “one size fits all” treatment. Each has its own pros and cons. Take some time to think about what matters most to you. What brings you joy? What do you value in life? What do you need to keep to still feel like YOU? Many people say that having more time with loved ones and doing things for fun makes treatment worth it. Treatment choice can affect:

- How you feel from day to day
- What you can eat and drink
- How many meds you take
- How much energy you have
- How well you sleep
- Your sex drive and function
- Whether you can carry or father children
- Whether you will be able to keep your job (and health plan)
- How long you may live

One choice may be a good fit for you now. Another may work out better for you later on. You can switch. Making a change is not a “failure.” Change is how self-management works over a lifetime.

My Kidney Life Plan is a tool to help you choose a treatment for kidney failure based on what matters to you. The tool is free online in English and Spanish. Find it at: mykidneylifeplan.org

[Click here to try it](#)



Conclusion

YOU manage your health most of the time. Self-management is self-care to keep you feeling your best. It is making the daily choices. Learning all you can. You deserve a good life, and the people who love you will be glad to see you taking good care of yourself.