



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

A guide to conservative kidney management

Information for Patients



What is conservative kidney management?

Some people with advanced kidney disease choose not to have treatment with dialysis. This is sometimes because they have other medical problems, which might mean they are frailer, and/or they feel that dialysis would not improve their quality of life.

Conservative kidney management provides all the aspects of kidney care support without the dialysis treatment.

Please remember that deciding not to have dialysis does not mean that you have made a decision not to be treated.

Once you have decided that you do not want to have dialysis we will still aim to:

- prolong and support your remaining kidney function
- control any symptoms of reduced kidney function
- provide support to both you and your loved ones
- help you make plans for the future.

How can I look after my kidney function?

- High blood pressure may cause kidney function to get worse more quickly. Always take your blood pressure medication. If you feel it isn't working for you, tell your kidney nurse/doctor.
- You need to be careful when you buy drugs/medicines from the chemist. Check with the pharmacist or your doctor or nurse that they will do no more harm to your kidneys.
- You can continue to eat healthily. Try not to add salt to your food. Salt can make you thirstier, cause you to retain more fluid and raise your blood pressure. If you need more advice about your diet we can arrange for you to speak with a dietitian.
- Sometimes it might be necessary to lower the amount of liquid you drink, to reduce water retention. Usually this can be avoided by having treatment with water tablets.
- Have your flu vaccination.
- Get treatment for other illnesses such as infections or diarrhoea as soon as possible; dehydration can cause kidney function to get worse very quickly.

What symptoms might I experience?

As your kidney function starts to fall, you may develop some symptoms such as:

- feeling tired and drowsy
- itching
- feeling sick
- feeling short of breath
- swollen ankles.

Please let your kidney doctor or nurse know about any symptoms you have. They can often be controlled by adjusting your medication or your diet.

We will monitor your blood results for signs of anaemia. Treatment for this can include iron supplements, treatment with a drug called erythropoietin (EPO) and sometimes blood transfusions.

Planning for the future

If you choose conservative kidney management, you will be offered the opportunity to discuss your wishes for your future care with your kidney nurse, doctor and any family members that you wish to include.

It may help you think about what is important to you, what you are worried about and where and how you want to be cared for when you come towards the end of your life.

With your permission, your wishes will be recorded in a care plan for you to keep in your home. You can then share this with everyone involved in your care, to make sure that your wishes are met.

If you have concerns about support for you and your family at any time, please feel free to contact any member of the renal team involved in your care. Please see the end of the leaflet for contact details.

How will my future care be managed?

You can continue coming to the renal clinic for as long as you wish.

Your kidney nurse and doctor will keep your GP and other professionals involved in your care fully informed. They will provide them with additional advice should it be required.

Should you no longer wish to come to the renal clinic, your kidney nurse will still be available to support you, your family and other professionals with managing the symptoms of your kidney disease.

The palliative care team can also offer further support, including advice about symptoms and medications.

Key points

You do not have to have dialysis and your decision not to will be fully supported.

Depending on your other medical conditions, dialysis may not extend or improve your life.

Conservative kidney management is a widely accepted treatment option for chronic kidney disease.

Your care is on-going and you may change your mind about dialysis over time. Please speak to your nurse or doctor if you want to discuss your options again.

Useful contacts

My kidney doctor

My kidney specialist nurse

Oxford Pre Dialysis Nurses

Tel: **01865 226 158** or **01865 225 359**

9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

(Please leave a message on the answerphone)

Useful websites

Oxford Kidney Unit

Lots of information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and carers.

Website: www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku

Kidney Patient Guide

Information for patients with kidney failure and those who care for them.

Website: www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk

Kidney Care UK

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: www.kidneycareuk.org

Six Counties Kidney Patients Association

The SCKPA is run for patients by patients or family members.

They offer support to people suffering from kidney disease or who are on dialysis. They work closely with the Oxford Kidney Unit and have branches in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, and Milton Keynes, and parts of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire.

Website: www.sixcountieskpa.org.uk

National Kidney Federation

A charity which has lots of practical support and information for people with kidney disease.

Website: www.kidney.org.uk

Further Information

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

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