



Considering Conservative Kidney Management (CKM)

Living well without dialysis



What is conservative kidney management (CKM)?

CKM is a treatment option for managing kidney disease. It involves:

- treating symptoms of kidney disease.
- preventing or managing problems.
- protecting and maintaining the remaining kidney function.
- supportive medical and psychosocial care when needed.
- helping people plan for the future.

CKM doesn't include dialysis, but it does include kidney care and support. The goals of CKM are for you to live well without dialysis, so you'll be as comfortable as possible and have a good quality of life.

Why choose CKM?

Dialysis may not help everyone live longer or improve their quality of life. For some people, the side effects of dialysis may even lower their quality of life or make them feel worse. Dialysis won't treat other medical problems (e.g., diabetes, heart conditions, arthritis, pain).

Some people might feel that for them, the burden of dialysis isn't worth the benefits. They might prefer non-dialysis care.

We know that some people aren't as likely to do well on dialysis, which means they aren't likely to live longer or feel better. Often, these are people who:

- have other serious medical problems (especially heart disease and/or dementia).
- need lots of help with activities like bathing, dressing, and moving around.
- Receiving treatment that is focused on helping you reach those goals.

CKM may be a better treatment for some people.

What can I expect if I choose CKM?

If you choose CKM, you'll:

- talk about what's most important to you (goals).
- get treatment to help you reach your goals.
- learn about what symptoms to expect as your kidneys change and how to manage them.
- have your symptoms checked regularly and treated if needed.
- have bloodwork done only as needed.
- take medicine as needed.
- talk about where you want to live as your kidney disease progresses.
- work on an action plan, so you don't have to go to the emergency department or hospital unless you really need to.
- talk with your family/friends and healthcare team about your wishes for treatment choices in the future (advance care planning).
- learn about resources in your community to support you and your family/friends.
- have support from your healthcare team from diagnosis through to dying and death.

After I choose CKM, can I change my mind?

Yes. The decision is yours. Your healthcare team will do everything they can to make sure you know what stage of illness you are at, how different treatments may affect your health and how you feel, and that you know about all of your treatment choices. We want to support you in the treatment choice that's best for you.

How long will I live while receiving CKM?

Nobody knows the answer to this question. Many factors affect how long you'll live. Depending on how fast your kidneys change, you may have weeks, months, or years to live. Some factors that affect how long you'll live include:

- your kidney function/glomerular filtration rate (GFR).
- other health problems (e.g., diabetes, heart disease).
- your lifestyle (e.g., weight, exercise, diet, blood pressure).
- your overall health (physical and mental health).

What kind of support will my family and I receive?

For most people, it's important to involve family or important friends (your support people) when deciding if CKM is the right choice for them. It's also important to ask your healthcare team for information and support when you need it.

If you wish, a meeting can be arranged with you, your support people, your doctor, social worker, and other healthcare providers. This meeting is to support you,

answer questions, and talk about concerns. For many people, knowing their support people understand their wishes is a relief and gives them peace of mind.

Reaching your decision about CKM or talking about the final stages of kidney disease may be very emotional for you and your support people. Everyone reacts differently when they're told their kidneys are failing—this is normal and expected.

Who will be on my healthcare team?

Everyone's healthcare team is different, depending on where they live and receive kidney care.

If you've been going to a kidney clinic, you might keep going to this clinic and see your nephrology team. Some people don't go to a kidney clinic, instead their kidney care is managed by a family doctor or nurse practitioner (NP).

Your healthcare team may include the following professionals. They'll respect your values, choices, and independence.

Nurses

A nurse is often your first contact for concerns and can refer you to other members of the healthcare team. If you go to a kidney clinic, you'll have a nurse as your case manager whom you can call for help and information.

You may have a Home Care nurse or case manager who sees you at home and works with your health care team.

Nurse Practitioners

Nurse Practitioners (NP) are nurses with extra training. Nurse practitioners can make full assessments, and diagnose and manage symptoms. They can order tests, do procedures, and prescribe medicine.

Doctors

You may have a kidney doctor (nephrologist) who will see you to help your kidneys work the best they can and to help manage symptoms. If you don't go to a kidney clinic, your family doctor will likely manage your kidney care and consult with a kidney doctor if needed.

Dietitians

Your dietitian will help with your food concerns. The kidney diet is not always easy to follow and your dietitian can help you make good food choices to help manage your kidney symptoms.

Social Workers

Social workers can help you and your family cope with stress and connect you to services that can help with finances, housing, transportation, and how you feel.

Pharmacists

Pharmacists help you manage your medicine and make sure what you're taking is safe for your kidneys.

Spiritual Health Practitioners

Spiritual health practitioners offer spiritual and emotional support to people and their families/friends.

