

Fitness First

Welcome to the summer 2007 issue of *Common Concerns*. The Consumer Committee met in October and voted unanimously to begin working on a new project for 2007/2008 - "Get up and Move," a project focused on exercise and fitness. In this issue you will find tips from patients who talk about what they do for exercise, a removable activity chart, answers to exercise questions from a nephrologist, and more. Our goal for this project is not to make us think about running in a marathon, but, perhaps walking a little further when going to the mail box, or parking further out at the store. Here in the Upper Midwest we have several seasons that are enjoyable for outside activity. We only have one body so let's take care of it!

Judith McLaughlin
Consumer Committee Chair



A Nephrologist Answers Your Exercise Questions

James McCarthy, M.D., Mayo Clinic Dialysis

Is it safe for a dialysis patient to exercise?

Exercise is an important part of a total program to help dialysis patients improve their health. Exercise can help improve muscle strength and endurance. In addition, regular exercise can improve sleep, decrease cholesterol levels, bring blood pressure under better control, and reduce the sensation of fatigue and lack of stamina. If a patient on dialysis is interested in starting to exercise, he or she should talk with their doctor to see if it is safe to exercise. Certain medications and medical conditions may affect the type of exercise that can safely be performed.

How can I fit exercise into my daily schedule?

In general, it is more convenient for hemodialysis patients to exercise on an off-dialysis day. Exercise can also be performed during a hemodialysis treatment. Exercising during hemodialysis may help improve waste product removal because increased blood flow to the muscles will allow more waste products to move into the blood stream and be removed during dialysis. Exercise can be performed on any day by peritoneal dialysis patients. Check with your dialysis provider regarding exercise programs that are available at your dialysis facility, and the program that might best fit with your dialysis schedule.

Can I exercise on hemodialysis days?

In general, vigorous exercise on the day of hemodialysis should probably be minimized. Immediately before a hemodialysis treatment, you may have retained a large amount of fluid and waste products. In this condition, vigorous exercise might provoke cardiovascular problems. Immediately after hemodialysis, many patients feel "washed out" and do not feel like doing exercise. However, if you feel rested, light exercise can be done after waiting for about 2-3 hours following hemodialysis. Above all, you should always listen to your body—if you feel excessively tired or short of breath, you should stop exercising immediately until you recover. If these symptoms continue to happen, you should notify your dialysis provider and/or physician.

Does walking count as exercise?

Walking is one of the most complete forms of exercise for anyone. While walking we use our arms and legs, which improves muscle tone in the entire body. In addition, weight bearing exercises like walking can improve bone strength of the spine and hips.

What other kinds of activity are helpful?

Patients with kidney disease should do everything possible to maintain regular physical activity. This can be low impact exercises or it can be a more vigorous exercise program. Everyday activities like walking, shopping, and gardening are also helpful. Consult with your dialysis provider and physician to come up with the best program for you.

Mitzi - Transplant Consumer

When I was on dialysis 10 years ago, I rarely exercised. I felt too tired all the time because I worked the whole 3 years I was on dialysis. That was my excuse for not exercising. After my Kidney transplant I felt a need for exercise to keep my kidney healthy. I made a conscious effort to start walking at least 3 times a week. I bought myself a treadmill since I live in Michigan and cannot walk outside during the winter months. I walk a half hour every time, which for me is a mile and a half. I have even walked a couple of 5K walk/runs this past summer. Since I have begun walking regularly, I have lowered my blood pressure, my weekly injections of Epogen™ have been discontinued, and have a lot more energy. I am in my 40's, and so I feel that exercise is mandatory for me, besides, it's fun!

Maggie - Transplant Consumer Exercise - It's for Caregivers, too!

Before every flight, airlines tell you to place the oxygen mask on yourself before you assist anyone else. It makes perfect sense. If you lose consciousness, you can not help those near and dear to you. It's the same for those who care for renal patients. If they're not healthy, they won't be able to assist their loved one with the day to day details of living with renal failure. But it is hard to remember to take care of yourself when you are faced with so much to do.

Caregivers help us when we can't help ourselves. They act as chauffeurs, personal shoppers, housekeepers, cooks, private secretaries, patient advocates, or maybe just a listening ear. These responsibilities are most likely added to an already full-time schedule.

Are you a caregiver? Exercise is one way for you to help yourself. It may seem impossible to squeeze one more thing into an already overbooked day, but the payoff is worth it. Exercise reduces stress, increases energy, stimulates your immune system, and adds a sense of well being. It can be the single most significant thing you do for yourself. Recent findings show that as little as 30 minutes a day, broken up into 10-minute increments, can result in all of these benefits. 10 minutes - a small investment for a huge reward. So, take a tip from the airlines and take care of yourself first!

Judy - Hemodialysis Consumer

For me, exercising is something that comes and goes, however, I try to remember to park a little way out, take the stairs, or ride the recumbent bike for a few minutes when the mood strikes. Exercise is not something everyone enjoys doing but the feeling after is so rewarding. Every day activities such as carrying a laundry basket up or down the stairs, carrying groceries, or walking the dog each evening can be part of an exercise program. So, although I am not currently on a regular workout program, it is something that I often remind myself I should do. In fact, I think I'll hop on that bike right now!

William - CCPD Consumer

In September, after I had a stroke, I received physical therapy two days a week for six weeks. The schedule included a variety of strengthening, mobility and balance work. I do feel better now with regular exercise. I want to keep enjoying golf and try to get back to playing three times a week and to continue to do other activities that I enjoy.

Maggie - Transplant Consumer

I'm not having a very good day today. My joints are kind of achy. I'm sluggish. My head hurts a little bit. In other words, the situation is normal. The worst part of it is that I am totally to blame for how I feel. It's entirely my own fault. I have let myself get so out of shape that my "normal" situation is kind of icky. I remember when I was a kid and I lived on my bicycle. I felt like I owned the world! And I remember as a young adult chasing kids all day long, cleaning house, and cooking meals with a kid in my arms and another one hanging onto my legs, and playing all sorts of games like tag. Movement and activity were my normal then. Now my normal is feeling sluggish and icky.

I can't blame this on kidney failure, or on having a transplant, or on being older now. The only thing I can blame it on is being so inactive for so long that I have lost muscle and gained weight. It's my own fault. But, there is a solution. If I get active again, I will regain the muscle and energy I have lost. All I have to do is pull myself up off of the couch and move more today than I did yesterday. And tomorrow I have to move more than I did today. And so on, and so on. It's not easy. I am going to be more tired and achier than I am now before I start feeling better. But I can guarantee that I will feel better if I just get up and start moving again. Yep, it's time to start playing again!

Just the Facts: Exercise for Life

No matter your age, exercise makes you stronger, more flexible, and keeps your heart healthy. If you stay fit, you will be more able to do things, like shopping or visiting friends. Exercise gives you energy. Think of your body as a rechargeable battery. Exercise recharges you! It helps control blood pressure, and if you are diabetic, exercise can lower your blood sugar. It aids circulation and helps you sleep. Exercise can also help keep your bones healthy. Mood lifting chemicals are released in your brain when you exercise, helping to fight depression and helping you to feel more positive about your life.

To begin your exercise program, tell your doctor that you want to exercise. He or she can make sure you do not have any special problems that would be made worse by a workout. Next, write down a goal such as walking around the block without stopping, bike riding, shopping at the mall, or going dancing. Make an exercise plan that will work for you. What kind of person are you? Do you prefer to do things alone, or would a group help keep you motivated? Write down how often you will exercise, what time of day, and for how long. Start with small blocks of time, like ten minutes every other day, then increase it by a minute or two each week.

Feeling better with exercise takes time. It may take a few weeks or a few months. Keep track of when you exercised, what you did, and how it felt. This will help you to see your small but steady progress and can keep you from getting discouraged and quitting. Once you reach your goal, set a new one. Exercise should become a long-term habit. It can also be fun!

People in wheelchairs can also exercise. There are many stretching and strengthening exercises that can be done in a chair. Moving your arms (and legs, if possible) can help strengthen your heart and using hand weights builds muscles.

Problem	How can I prevent it?	What should I ask?
I'm too <i>tired</i> to exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise helps <i>fight</i> fatigue! Try to work out early on your off days from dialysis. • Talk to your doctor if fatigue keeps you from doing things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my red blood cell count at the target level? • How can my fatigue be treated so I can be more active?
I've tried to exercise, but I always quit. It's boring and I don't see any progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it fun! Pick music you love and save it for exercise. • Find an exercise buddy. • Find an exercise group in your area. Meet new people. • Reward yourself when you finish each session. • Build variety into your plan. Each week, change what you do and where. Pick different music and rewards. • Keep a log each time you work out so you see progress. • Try something new, like yoga or tai chi, if available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a community center in our area have any beginning exercise classes? • Does someone else at this unit want to be my exercise buddy? • Where could I find some new types of exercises to try?
I don't know which exercises are good for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the library and find a book. • Talk to your doctor. Ask for a referral to a physical therapist for an exercise plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exercises are best to improve my strength, flexibility, endurance, and heart health?

Adapted with permission, Life Options Rehabilitation Program, Madison, WI

Resource	Description	To Obtain More Information
<i>Exercise: A Guide for People on Dialysis</i>	Booklet describing how to start and maintain a sensible exercise program.	Life Options c/o Medical Education Institute, Inc. 414 D'Onofrio Drive Suite 200 Madison, WI 53719 1-800-468-7777 www.lifeoptions.org
<i>Staying Fit with Kidney Disease</i> <i>What You Should Know About Exercise</i> <i>Keeping Your Heart Healthy When You Have Chronic Kidney Disease</i>	Articles offering suggestions and guidance about exercise for kidney patients	National Kidney Foundation 30 East 33rd Street New York, NY 10016 1-800-622-9010 http://www.kidney.org/atoz/
American Association of Kidney Patients	Articles on the benefits of physical activity, tips for staying physically active, and personal accounts from kidney patients.	American Association of Kidney Patients 3505 E. Frontage Rd. Suite 315 Tampa, FL 33607 1-800-749-2257 http://www.aakp.org/aakp-library/
<i>Exercise for dialysis patients--Of course, you can exercise</i> Sit and Be Fit	Article with advice on exercise for dialysis patients Offers health tips and exercises for seniors, physically limited individuals and those managing chronic conditions.	DaVita http://www.davita.com/article/dialysis/514 Sit and Be Fit P.O. Box 8033 Spokane, WA 99203-0033 1-509-448-9438 www.sitandbefit.org



Thank you so much to all those who completed or helped patients complete Network 11's Fistula First Questionnaire from the fall edition of "Common Concerns". We are excited to share the results with you!

The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine if patients understand the information they have received about Fistula First. We also wanted to gain a better understanding of the patient's perspective on vascular access, decision-making, and educational resources.

646 patients completed and returned questionnaires. Of the respondents, 63% had a fistula; 62% reported receiving pre-dialysis education; 42% had heard of Fistula First; 73% knew the difference between a fistula and a graft; and 83% discussed access type with their doctor or facility. Patients identified speaking with experts (doctor, nurse, etc.) as the most helpful in making decisions on vascular access. Most importantly, patients who received pre-dialysis education were significantly more likely to have an AV fistula. Please feel free to contact me with any comments or questions. Thanks again for all your assistance.

Renae Nelson
Patient Service Coordinator
(800) 973-3773

Are you a dialysis or transplant patient who lives in WI or SD?

If you answered yes to this question, you should consider serving on the Renal Network 11 Consumer Committee. The Consumer Committee is made up of 13 ESRD consumers from the states of Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. We currently have openings in SD and WI. The members of this Committee help support Network 11 in its mission to assess and improve the quality of care provided to individuals with End Stage Renal Disease. If you would like some more information about serving on this important committee, please call Renae Nelson at 1-800-973-3773



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