

MY PLAN: *How to Talk to Your Healthcare Team*

WHO IS ON MY HEALTHCARE TEAM?

Your healthcare team is you and the staff who cares for you. Your doctor is like the “head coach,” and your social worker, dietitian, nurses, and techs are part of the team. You may also have a family doctor and see other specialists. The most important member of your team is *you*.

WHY AM I THE MOST IMPORTANT TEAM MEMBER?

Because it is your life and your treatment. Being an involved dialysis patient means you partner with other team members in all aspects of your treatment plan. It is the best way to address any concerns or questions you may have and it will help you learn about your dialysis care.

Your care team needs to know how you feel, both physically and emotionally. They want to know what concerns you have so they can help you follow your medication, treatment, and diet plans, as well as help you to set and reach realistic goals.



WHAT DOES MY TEAM DO FOR ME?

- Your team is important because their goal is to keep you healthy.
- Your dialysis doctor prescribes medicines and follows your care.
- Nurses and technicians make sure you get safe, effective dialysis, based on your doctor’s orders.
- Your dietitian teaches you to plan renal meals.
- Your social worker can help you and your family cope with dialysis and help you sign up for additional services you may be eligible for.

HOW SHOULD I TALK TO MY HEALTHCARE TEAM?

- Ask questions! Patients who study their options and help make decisions about their care are stronger members of their care teams.
- Write your questions down so you don’t forget them.
- Ask your most important question first.
- Repeat back the answers you hear and write them down.
- Don’t be afraid to ask if you don’t know the meaning of a medical term.
- Be as clear as you can when you have a problem.
- Enlist a caregiver or family member to help you communicate with your team.

HOW CAN I MAKE SURE I GET WHAT I NEED FROM MY HEALTHCARE TEAM?

Concern	How can I prevent it?	What should I ask?
I always feel so rushed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before an appointment, write down your questions. • Don't get sidetracked by small talk. Be pleasant but make sure you get meaningful answers to all of your questions. • If you run out of time, make another appointment. 	I wrote down some questions – can you please answer them for me before I leave?
After I've seen my doctor, I have a hard time telling my family what she/he said to me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat what the doctor said back to him/her to be sure you understand. • Write down what you heard. • Bring a family member to the appointment if you can. • Ask if there is written information you can take home to your family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I tell you what I heard you say, so you can tell me if I heard it right? • Do you have a pamphlet on this problem that I could take home with me?
There is so much about my kidney disease I don't understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the things that confuse you. • Ask the social worker to help you find people to answer your questions. • Go to the library and do your own research. • Join an American Association Kidney Patients or National Kidney Foundation chapter (see below) to learn from other patients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the best person on my team to ask about _____? • Do you have anything I could read about _____?

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WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WORKING WITH MY HEALTHCARE TEAM?

- HSAG: The Florida ESRD Network (Network 7): 800.826.3773/ <http://fmqai.com/about-network-7.aspx>
- Life Options Rehabilitation Program: 800.468.7777/ www.lifeoptions.org and www.kidneyschool.org.
- The American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP): 800.749.AAKP/ www.aakp.org.
- The National Kidney Foundation (NKF): 800.622.9010/ www.kidney.org.
- Renal Support Network: 866.903.1728/ <http://www.rsnhope.org>.
- Dialysis Patient Citizens: 855.291.3725/ <http://www.dialysispatients.org>.