

End-of-Life Care for the Dialysis Patient: An Introduction for Patients and Families

Talking about your wishes can help you and your family plan for your future care.



Today's treatments for kidney failure allow you to participate in life and enjoy your family and friends. Dialysis is a life-saving treatment, but it is not a cure. Most people with kidney failure have other diseases or conditions that get worse over time. At some point, you could face failing health and – as all people do, regardless of their health – the end of life.

Looking ahead can be overwhelming and scary to think about. But it helps to take control of your care by telling your health care providers and your family about your wishes and the type of care you want as your disease progresses. This also will make it easier for them to make decisions for you if you become too sick to make them yourself.

Many people on dialysis say they feel better knowing that they talked with their family or social worker about their wishes for the future. They say that they:

- Feel a sense of control over their future
- Have peace of mind
- Know they have made sure that they will be taken care of with dignity, through pain relief and other chosen treatment
- Feel they will be less of a burden to their family, who will not have to make difficult decisions on their behalf

All these decisions are called “**advance care planning**,” which is simply planning for your care before you need it.

You dialysis facility staff are ready to work with you on putting some of these decisions in writing so you can have peace of mind about your future. You can always change any of your decisions later; they are not set in stone.

Additional Online Resources

The Kidney End-of-Life Coalition was specifically designed to promote patient-centered end-of-life care for dialysis and chronic kidney disease patients.

The Coalition's website – www.kidneyeol.org – has many valuable resources for patients on such topics as:

- Advance Care Planning
- Hospice & Palliative Care
- Dialysis Withdrawal
- Ethical Issues ... and more

This flyer is based upon the brochure *Advance Care Planning: For the Dialysis Patient and their Family*, developed by the Mid-Atlantic Renal Coalition (MARC) and the Academy for Educational Development (AED). To request a copy of this brochure, call the MARC office at 804.794.3757.