

How is CKD treated?

While there is no cure for chronic kidney disease (CKD), sometimes we can treat the causes. Most treatments aim to control the symptoms, and slow down the decline in your kidney function.

It's important to diagnose CKD early, as it may be possible to slow down damage to your kidneys. If you have early CKD, your GP is likely to manage it, often with drugs. It's also important that you make some lifestyle changes.

However, even with medication and lifestyle changes, kidney function can keep getting worse until you need care from a kidney specialist, also called a nephrologist.

If your kidneys stop working, this means they won't be able to filter and clean your blood, and won't be able to remove the waste and extra fluid from your body. But this usually doesn't happen quickly. You are likely to have plenty of time to learn about and plan for the next stage.

You and your family will receive a lot of support to help you make decisions about whether to have dialysis, a kidney transplant, or supportive treatment.

Learn more about the medicines used to treat kidney disease.

Kidney transplant

A kidney transplant is the best treatment for severe CKD. It involves an operation that takes a kidney from another person and puts it into the body of someone with CKD. The donated kidney can come from someone who is alive, or from a dead donor.

You only need one kidney, which is why someone with healthy kidneys can donate one to someone with CKD. However, it's not possible for everyone.

If you would benefit from a transplant but don't have a suitable live donor, you will go on a kidney transplant waiting list. It could take several years before a suitable kidney from a dead donor becomes available.

Dialysis

Dialysis is a medical treatment that artificially cleans your blood, in the way that your kidneys would if they were working properly. Unfortunately, dialysis doesn't do this as well as your kidneys would if they were healthy – but it does enough to keep you alive.

There are two types of dialysis.

Haemodialysis

In haemodialysis a machine removes your blood, then pumps it through a filter, called a dialyser, or artificial kidney. The dialyser removes the waste and extra fluid, before returning the clean blood to your body.

If you need haemodialysis, you will also need an access point to your blood vessels. This is called vascular access. You usually have haemodialysis in your own home, three to four times a week. Each session takes from four to eight hours.

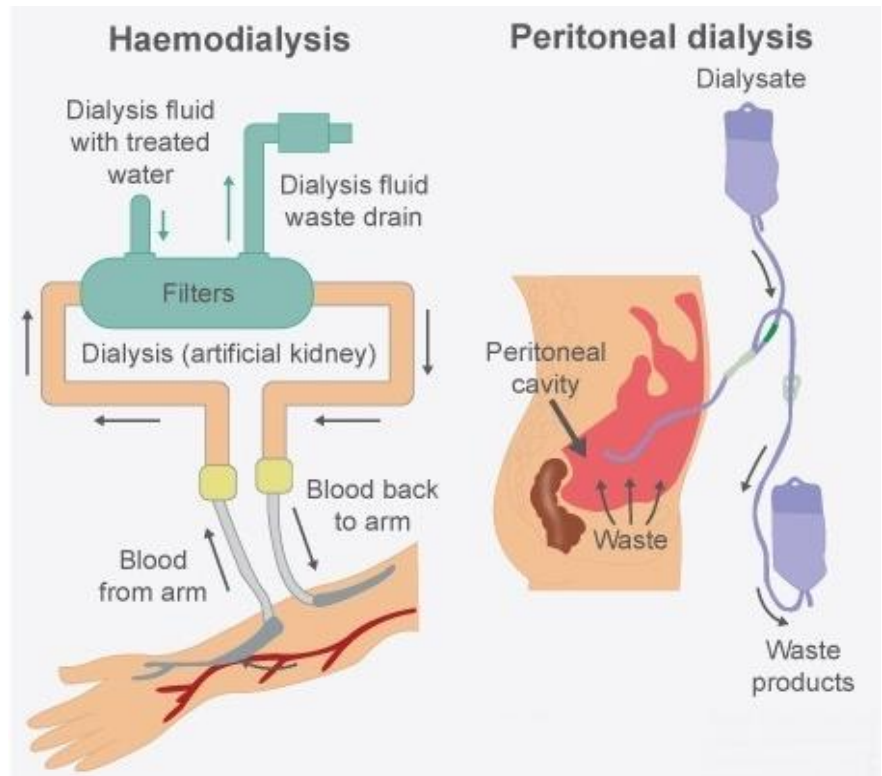


Peritoneal dialysis

Peritoneal dialysis cleans the blood inside your body, rather than using a machine like haemodialysis does. It does this using your peritoneum, a lining inside your abdomen, or tummy.

With peritoneal dialysis, you put a solution called dialysate through a tube into a space in your abdomen called your peritoneal cavity. Your blood flows from your peritoneal blood vessels into the solution, which cleans your blood by removing the waste and extra fluid. Clean blood then flows back into your body.

After a certain amount of time, you empty the solution out of your body and replace it with fresh fluid. This is called an exchange, and takes about 30 minutes. You may have to do up to four exchanges a day. Sometimes the exchanges can be done overnight by a machine. You do peritoneal dialysis at home.



Supportive treatment

If you have severe CKD, you will die if you don't have dialysis or a kidney transplant. But not everyone can have dialysis or a transplant, and some people choose not to. This does not mean you won't be looked after. Supportive treatment focuses on managing your symptoms, providing a good quality of life, and supporting you and your family or whānau.

i Local health professionals recommend the following pages.

- Kidney Health New Zealand (www.kidneys.co.nz for all pamphlets, go to Patient information > Information on kidney disease)
 - Living with kidney disease
This comprehensive, 96-page downloadable booklet covers every aspect of living with CKD, including treatment options, nutrition, lifestyle and more.
 - Treatment options for chronic kidney disease (CKD)
This leaflet gives more information about the differences between the different types of treatment for CKD.
 - Conservative treatment
This leaflet explains why people might choose not to have dialysis, and what the implications of that are.

Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Endorsed by clinical director, Nephrology Department, Canterbury DHB. August 2016.