



# Exercise and keeping fit

Patient Information



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Exercise helps to keep your body healthy and strong. It can improve well-being and even reduce the symptoms of some health problems. However it can be hard to keep to a regular exercise routine if you have long term kidney conditions and particularly if you have treatments such as dialysis

This leaflet outlines the types of exercise that are recommended for people with kidney problems and gives advice on the best ways in which to exercise.

It is important to speak to your medical team before starting a new exercise programme to make sure that it is suitable for your individual health situation. They may also be able to put you in touch with a physiotherapist who can help you work out the best exercise programme for your lifestyle.



## How can exercise help me?

Exercise helps give you extra energy to move around, carry out your daily tasks and enjoy your leisure time.

**Other benefits may include:**

- Improved diabetes control
- Improved sleep
- Improved mood and general quality of life
- Increase in dialysis efficiency
- Healthier bones
- Stronger muscles
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower cholesterol
- Lower stress levels





## What type of exercise should I do?

Continuous activities are likely to be most beneficial for people with kidney disease as they involve steady, whole body moments.

These include:

- Walking - a pedometer can be a good way of monitoring your progress
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Cycling - outdoors or on an exercise bike
- Dancing

Strength exercises such as moderate weight lifting and aerobic routines can also be beneficial. You may need to avoid contact sports such as hockey and rugby, as well as heavy weight lifting, depending on your kidney condition. Talk to your kidney team about what activities are safe for you to do.

Exercise doesn't have to cost money. Walking the dog around your local park or spending some time gardening can be just as beneficial as a gym membership. Some dialysis units have exercise equipment that you can use while you dialyse so talk to your kidney team to see what is available.

It is important to choose an activity that you enjoy doing as you are more likely to stick at it.

## How long should I exercise for?

You should aim to exercise for around 30 minutes a day, at least three days a week. If you are not used to exercising you should build up to this level slowly over time to avoid the risk of injury.

You don't have to do all the exercise in one go. Try getting off the bus one stop earlier and walking an extra 10 minutes into work or doing some stretches in front of the television in the evening. Little and often can be more beneficial than doing everything in one go.





## When should I exercise?

It is best to spread your exercise out across the week rather than doing it all on consecutive days and then nothing for the rest of the week. Some weeks you may feel able to do more exercise than others depending on how well you feel. It is important to listen to what your body is telling you and not do too much in one go.

You are more likely to keep to a regular exercise routine if you schedule it into your normal day. Wait for at least one hour after eating a big meal before you start exercising. You may want to avoid exercising just before going to bed as it can make it harder to get to sleep.

## How hard should I exercise?

To get the most benefit out of exercising you need to 'push' yourself so that you feel that you are getting active. Your breathing and heart rate should increase, but not so much that you cannot carry out a conversation while exercising. You should start each exercise session slowly to warm up your muscles, increase the speed and then slow down when you are close to finishing.

### You should stop exercising if you:

- Feel very tired
- Have leg cramps
- Feel dizzy
- Become short of breath
- Have chest pain

**Remember:** talk to your kidney team before starting or changing your exercise routine. You should also talk to them about exercise if your treatment schedule changes, such as an increase in dialysis sessions.





## Where can I find out more information?

- NHS Choices: Living with Kidney Disease:  
[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Kidney-disease-chronic](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Kidney-disease-chronic)
- Patient View: [www.patientview.org](http://www.patientview.org)  
- online access to your health records. Ask your renal unit for details about how to join.
- British Renal Society: Time Project Exercise resources  
[www.britishrenal.org/education/timeproject](http://www.britishrenal.org/education/timeproject)



 [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)

 01420 541424

 Kidney Care UK,  
3 The Windmills,  
St Mary's Close,  
Turk Street,  
Alton GU34 1EF


 [kidneycareuk.org](https://www.facebook.com/kidneycareuk)

 [@kidneycareuk](https://twitter.com/kidneycareuk)



 [www.renal.org](http://www.renal.org)

 0117 4148152

 The Renal Association  
C/O UK Renal Registry,  
Learning and Research Building,  
Southmead Hospital,  
Bristol BS10 5NB

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