

## Working with a Nephrologist

Developing a warm, trusting, and collaborative relationship with your kidney doctor—or nephrologist—is an important step in managing your kidney disease. Your nephrologist is your partner and guide, along with your family and friends, to understanding what life is like for someone with kidney disease, and how best to adapt to treatments and medications while maintaining the quality of life you deserve.

Having serious kidney disease is a significant transition both for you and your family, but your kidney disease doesn't have to consume your life. You and your nephrologist will need to think about how to:

- Balance your home life with your treatments
- Ensure you understand all your medicines and are able to afford them, as well as take them as prescribed
- Continue working despite having a treatment schedule that might interfere with your job
- Maintain a positive attitude about your life and your future

Yes, these may be challenging, but my advice to my patients is to face them head-on, to discuss them openly with their nephrologist and their family, and to take advantage of available resources such as social workers and other patients. When you make an appointment with your doctor, make a list of all the questions and concerns you have before going to the office, and make sure you cover all of them during the visit.

One of the greatest joys of my career has been working with patients and their families as they approach the need for a transplant or dialysis, and watching them realize that they can have full, satisfying, and productive lives despite a kidney disease diagnosis. It is clear that the more involved they are in their care, the better their quality of life, no matter what the kidney disease throws their way. Their courage—and yours—is an inspiration to me.

### Top 5 questions to ask a nephrologist:

1. How can I lead a “normal” life when I go on dialysis?
2. How can I keep working?
3. What will my quality of life be?
4. What resources are available to help manage my health?
5. How important is it for me to manage my medications and kidney diet?