

Exercise and keeping fit



Working together for better patient information

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

This leaflet describes 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:

- increase in dialysis efficiency
- improved diabetes control
- lower blood pressure
- lower cholesterol levels
- healthier bones
- stronger muscles
- better quality sleep
- improved mood and general quality of life
- healthy weight management



What type of exercise should I do?

Exercise can take many forms. Try to find one that you can do, that fits into your lifestyle and that you enjoy.

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

These include:

- walking – a pedometer or app on your phone can be a good way of monitoring your progress
- jogging
- swimming
- cycling – outdoors, or on an exercise bike
- dancing

Strength exercises like 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 the activities that are safe for you to do.

Exercise doesn't have to cost money.

Regularly walking the dog around your local park or spending time gardening can be just as beneficial as a gym membership. Some dialysis units have exercise equipment you can use while you dialyse, so talk to your kidney team to see what is available.

If you have severe kidney problems you may struggle with mobility and lack energy. You may feel that you are unable to exercise, but even a very small amount of gentle movement is better than nothing.

Community groups often offer seated aerobics classes and some swimming pools have special sessions for people undergoing rehabilitation therapy that you may be able to join. There are also lots of online videos of gentle stretching exercises that you may be able to do.

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?

The standard government advice is to aim to exercise for **around 30 minutes a day, at least three days a week**. This may not be possible, however, if you have severe kidney disease and/or reduced mobility. If you are not used to exercising, you should build up slowly to avoid the risk of injury.

You don't have to do all the exercise in a single session. Try getting off the bus one stop earlier and walking an extra 10 minutes, 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.**

You are more likely to keep to a regular exercise routine if you schedule it into your day. Wait for at least one hour after eating a big meal before exercising. You may also 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. Gradually increase the speed and then slow down when you are close to finishing.

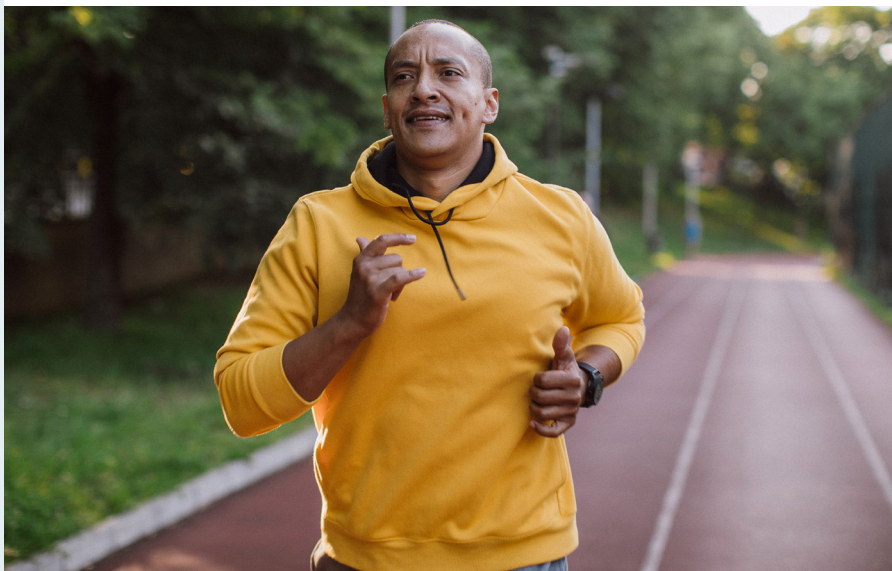
You should stop exercising if you:

- 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 more information?

- Kidney Care UK: About Kidney Health – www.kidneycareuk.org/about-kidney-health
- Kidney Beam is an exercise subscription service for people living with kidney disease – www.beamfeelgood.com/home
- NHS: CKD – www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-disease






Contact us



In partnership with



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