

# Working with CKD and ESRD

All too often, patients diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) or End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) believe that they can, or should, no longer work. Actually, the opposite may be true. Many patients who have CKD, ESRD and even those on dialysis continue to work full time, part time or do volunteer work. In fact, a recent study by DaVita Clinical Research shows that patients who continue to work have 45% lower mortality rates (chance of dying) and a 40% lower hospitalization rate.<sup>1</sup> Of course, your health should always be your first priority. **So, make sure to have an individual conversation with your healthcare team to determine what is right for you and your condition.**

This education sheet was developed to help answer your questions and to inform you that having Chronic Kidney Disease or even kidney failure doesn't have to mean you can't continue to live a normal lifestyle, including the ability to work.

## What is CKD?

Chronic Kidney Disease occurs when the filtering units of your kidneys are impaired and there is a gradual loss of kidney function over time. This is often due to other medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease.



## Can I continue to work if I have CKD or Kidney Failure?

It is possible to continue to work with Chronic Kidney Disease or Kidney Failure. Talk to your doctor to determine what is right for you and your condition. Many patients find that continuing to work or engage in the same activities they participated in prior to their diagnosis assists in their overall well-being. The American Society of Nephrology completed a study and found patients that continued working had lower rates of depression.<sup>2</sup>

## **Can I continue to work if I'm on dialysis?**

Many patients continue to work while on dialysis. Patients should work closely with their social worker and the dialysis healthcare team to determine which treatment option may be a good fit based on their condition, schedule and lifestyle. Many patients find that the transition onto dialysis can be the most difficult part. So, some patients take short term disability, FMLA or other available leave during the transition and then return to work once they have adjusted.

## **What if I don't have a paying job but wish to do volunteer work?**

Regardless of your "work", it is important to be able to continue to do the things you like to do, including volunteering. Patients who volunteer have similar quality outcomes to those who are employed<sup>1</sup>. Volunteering is a great way to give back to your community AND support your personal health and wellbeing.

## **I recently had a kidney transplant, am I able to return to work?**

Although the timing may be different for each individual, patients who have had a kidney transplant can often return to work after the surgery. However, it will be important to discuss this with your transplant physician prior to returning to work to make sure you are well enough to do so.

## **Am I obligated to tell my employer about my disease?**

There are many laws that help protect your privacy and prohibit discrimination against you based on your disease. If you feel that your condition may have an impact on your working schedule or your ability to perform your job, you may want to have a discussion with your healthcare team and your employer to determine what options are available that might work for you. Remember that some employers may not understand kidney disease so it is important to consult your healthcare team so that you can come prepared with the documentation needed to help educate them on some of the accommodations you may need.

## **How can my healthcare team help me manage my disease while I continue working?**

Your care team at OKHC will work with you on an individual basis to determine activities you can continue to participate in normally and those that you should scale back on or eliminate. Your team at OKHC or your social worker can also provide you with educational materials and talking points for your employer.

### **References:**

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-disease/living-with/#work-finances-and-benefits>
- <https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/working>
- <sup>1</sup> Jiacong Luo, MD, MS, MPH; Dena E. Cohen, PhD; Steven M. Brunelli, MD, MSCE. The Impact of Employment Status or Insurance Type on Outcomes Among Patients with End-Stage Renal Disease. DaVita Clinical Research. 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> Working ESRD pts had 21% lower incidence of depression relative to those who quit - Nancy G. Kutner, Rebecca Zhang, Yijian Huang, and Kirsten L. Johansen. Depressed Mood, Usual Activity Level, and Continued Employment after Starting Dialysis. Clin J Am Soc. Nephrol. 2010 Nov; 5(11):2040-5.