

THE KIDNEY FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

Choosing to Stop Dialysis



**MAKING THE CHOICES
THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU**

A BROCHURE FOR
PATIENTS AND FAMILIES



Choosing to Stop Dialysis

You have the right to make your own choices about how you are treated for kidney failure. That means you can choose to stop dialysis. It's important for you to have all the information you need to make this decision.

If you stop dialysis, you may die fairly quickly. This pamphlet addresses concerns you or your family may have. It will help you get ready to talk about this choice with your healthcare team.

■ Why would I choose to stop dialysis?

Living with an illness like kidney failure can be physically challenging and emotionally painful. Dialysis is meant to improve your life, not cause harm and suffering. Stopping dialysis is a personal decision based on the quality of life you want to have.

It's important for you to make this choice for the right reasons. Your healthcare team can help you rule out any factors like depression or other issues that could be changed to improve your quality of life.

■ Is stopping dialysis considered suicide?

NO. Stopping dialysis is like any other choice people make when they decide if they want a medical treatment.

What makes this decision difficult is that without treatment, you will die.

Canadian healthcare standards accept stopping dialysis as a treatment choice, as do most religions. You may wish to speak with your religious advisor if you are concerned your faith or culture has a different view.

■ What is going to happen to me if I stop dialysis?

Each person reacts differently when dialysis is stopped, depending on their medical conditions. If you stop dialysis, you will need to talk to your doctor about the kind of care you want as you are dying. Sometimes people want to be in hospital during this time. Others want to make plans to have help and support so they can die at home. Depending on where you live, homecare may provide special services. Your healthcare team will still provide care for you.

■ How do I talk about this with my family and friends?

The decision to stop dialysis can be a very difficult and painful choice to share. It is important to talk about this

decision with your loved ones. You may need to help them understand why you made this decision. If you get very sick, your family may have to make treatment decisions for you. For that reason, you need to share your feelings with them. Your Renal Social Worker and other members of your healthcare team can help you prepare for this difficult conversation.

■ **What kind of support can I get?**

If you choose to stop dialysis, you should talk with your healthcare team about what kind of help is available in the hospital or in your home community. Every community is different and every patient's needs are different.

■ **Can I change my mind and go back on dialysis?**

YES. If you decide to go back on dialysis, you need to let your doctor or healthcare team know as soon as possible.

■ **What else do I need to have in place?**

Whether you choose to stop dialysis or not, you might want to have your Will, Power of Attorney (personal care and finances), Advance Directives and funeral arrangements in place. You may also want to talk to your family about your wishes regarding tissue and organ donation.

■ Questions to ask your healthcare team:

- How will I feel after stopping dialysis?
- Will my healthcare team still look after me?
- How long will I live?
- Can I choose where I die?
- What kind of food and drink can I have?
- If I change my mind, what should I do?
- What can be done if I have any pain or discomfort?
- Who will be there to help support my family?

Feel free to add your own questions and bring this list with you.

Your healthcare team cares about you and your family. Please discuss any of these questions with them.

This brochure is a collaborative effort between:

- Canadian Association of Nephrology Nurses and Technologists (CANNT)
- Canadian Association of Nephrology Social Workers (CANSW)
- Canadian Society of Nephrology (CSN)
- The Kidney Foundation of Canada (KFOC)



THE KIDNEY FOUNDATION

OUR VISION

Kidney health, and improved lives for all people affected by kidney disease.

OUR MISSION

The Kidney Foundation of Canada is the national volunteer organization committed to reducing the burden of kidney disease through:

- funding and stimulating innovative research;
- providing education and support;
- promoting access to high quality healthcare; and
- increasing public awareness and commitment to advancing kidney health and organ donation.

For further information, or if you wish to help us in our efforts, please contact The Kidney Foundation of Canada office in your area. You can also visit our Web site at **www.kidney.ca**.

© 2005

This material is available in accessible formats upon request by contacting **info@kidney.ca** or calling **1-800-361-7494**.



*The foundation
of kidney care.*