

An Introduction to the Advanced Kidney Care Team (AKCT)

Introduction

This leaflet explains the role of the AKCT; it gives information about the care you should receive and introduces the other members of the renal team that you will meet.

The Advanced Kidney Care Team

The Advanced Kidney Care Team is a specialist group of nurses who care for patients with severe kidney failure. A Renal Consultant has referred you to this team because unfortunately, your kidney function is deteriorating, and it is likely that you will require treatment to replace your kidney's functions in the future. It is the role of the nurse to prepare you for this treatment and to care for you until the treatment starts.

Assessment and Education

As a new patient, you will be offered an appointment with one of the Advanced Kidney Care Team to meet to discuss your kidney problems. At this appointment an assessment will be carried out and the nurse will then explain about the kidneys, kidney failure and the various treatments available.

Treatment Options

Here is a very brief description of each treatment. There are also other information leaflets available.

Peritoneal Dialysis

This is usually recommended as the first line treatment for patients.

This form of dialysis uses a membrane in your abdomen called the peritoneum which surrounds your bowel and internal organs. The membrane is filled with dialysis/cleaning fluid through a little tube inserted into your abdomen. The fluid sits inside you and cleans you constantly. However, the fluid has to be renewed 4 times a day; a process which takes about 40 minutes each time and can be done at home or work. Automated Peritoneal Dialysis (APD) is another method of peritoneal dialysis which is performed overnight whilst you sleep.

Haemodialysis

A haemodialysis machine cleans your blood removing poisons and toxins and excess fluid from your body. You would need to be attached to the machine for 4 hours, at least 3 times a week. This treatment can be performed at home or at a specialist unit.

Transplantation

A kidney transplant is often the most suitable and effective treatment for kidney failure. A kidney transplant involves a healthy kidney from a human donor being placed inside your lower abdomen. The healthy kidney then takes over the work that your own kidneys can no longer do. A kidney donor can come from two sources:

- Living kidney donation, such as a family member or friend

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- Cadaveric kidney donation from a person who has recently died

Not everyone is suitable to have a kidney transplant, so you may need several investigations to confirm that you are medically fit before you are referred to the transplant centre. As a transplant patient, you would need to take medication to prevent rejection for as long as the transplant continues to function.

Conservative Management

Some patients may decide that dialysis is not going to improve their quality of life and may indeed make it worse. These patients usually have a lot of other medical problems and the decision not to have dialysis is supported by the renal team.

The conservative management programme aims to maintain a good quality of life without dialysis treatment. We aim to control symptoms and provide support for the patient and their family.

Nurse led clinics

After the initial home visit you will be followed up by the specialist nurses in a nurse led clinic. These are held at:

- Heartlands Hospital ; every Tuesday afternoon in the Heartlands Treatment Centre
- Solihull Hospital; on the first Tuesday and 3rd Friday afternoon of each month
- Good Hope Hospital; on the first and third Thursday afternoon of each month
- Conservative Management; second Tuesday of every month, clinic 4 Heartlands Hospital

At this clinic appointment you will be assessed by one for the Advanced Kidney Care Team. Your weight and blood pressure will be measured, your ankles will be checked for signs of swelling and your medication will be reviewed. The nurses will take a history of how you have been since the last appointment and will give you forms for a blood test.

At each appointment your decision about treatment will be discussed. A renal consultant is always at the clinic to deal with any medical concerns. Blood results are always checked next day by the kidney nurses and urgent results dealt with immediately.

A number of other health professionals are also at the clinics and may need to see you from time to time. These include:

- **Renal Dietitians**

It is important that all patients with kidney failure are seen regularly by a dietician to ensure that they are eating well. You will be offered advice about diet and some medications. All advice will be individual dependent upon your blood results.

- **Renal Anaemia Nurse Specialists**

Most patients with kidney failure suffer from a degree of renal anaemia; that is, they produce fewer red blood cells and consequently carry less oxygen which means the patient has less energy. Symptoms of renal anaemia include extreme tiredness, lethargy, shortness of breath and feeling the cold. The renal anaemia nurse specialists will monitor your blood results and start you on treatment as required.

- **Renal Access Nurse Specialist**

Once a patient has made a decision about dialysis they will be referred to the access nurse who will arrange fistula formations for haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis

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catheter insertions. Once the access has been formed it will be checked regularly at the clinic.

Other health professionals can also offer help and support if required. These include:

Renal Social Worker

Renal Occupational Therapist

When will I commence dialysis?

As a kidney patient, you will have blood tests at each clinic appointment to monitor your condition. One of the blood tests will measure how well the kidneys are working; this is called the GFR (Glomerular Filtration Rate). We often call this the percentage kidney function. A healthy person with two functioning kidneys should have a kidney function of around 98- - 100 %. Dialysis is usually started once the kidney function has dropped below 10% dependant on your symptoms.

How to contact the Advanced Kidney Care Team

The Advanced Kidney Care Team, work Monday to Friday, 8am till 4pm Telephone number **0121 424 2677**

Please do not hesitate to call us with any queries, particularly with concerns about new medication.

If it is an urgent problem that cannot wait because you are seriously unwell, the family doctor should be informed or call an ambulance by dialling 999.

If your call is not answered immediately, please leave a message and we will return the call as soon as possible.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk