to your Health!
"Promoting Good Health Through Information"
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Advance Directives Explained

Robyn Medcalf, LCSW

Having an Advance Directive is all about making your health care wishes known. As a patient at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, you have a say in the health care you receive. When you are sick, your doctor will explain the treatments there are for your illness so that you can help decide which one is best for you. However, there may be times when you are too sick to understand or express your choices. At these times, it can be helpful to have decided in advance who you would want to make these decisions for you if you cannot. There is a legal document called an "Advance Directive" that lets you name the person you trust to make health care decisions for you if you can't make them for yourself. This person is referred to as your "health care agent." It's best to choose someone you trust, who, knows you well, knows your values, and would be willing to assume this responsibility. If you choose not to designate a "health care agent," your doctor will choose someone to make decisions for you in the following order: spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or a close friend.

An "Advance Directive" also lets you express your treatment preferences in a section known as a "Living Will." In this section, you can indicate what you would or would not want done under certain circumstances. A living will tells how you feel about care intended to sustain life. You can accept or refuse medical care. There are many issues to address, including but not limited to:

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Recipe for Health

1-2-3 PEACH COBBLER

Ingredients:

1/2 tsp cinnamon, ground
1 Tbsp vanilla extract
2 Tbsps cornstarch
1 cup peach nectar
1/4 cup pineapple juice or peach juice
2 16-oz cans peaches, sliced, packed in juice, drained (or 1-3/4 lbs) fresh
1 Tbsp margarine, tub
1 cup pancake mix, dry
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
2/3 cup evaporated skim milk nonstick cooking oil spray (for baking dish)

Topping:
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1 Tbsp brown sugar

Directions:

1. Combine cinnamon, vanilla, cornstarch, peach nectar, and pineapple or peach juice in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until mixture thickens and bubbles. Add sliced peaches to mixture.
2. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes.
3. In another saucepan melt margarine and set aside.
4. Lightly spray an 8-inch square glass dish with cooking oil spray. Pour hot peach mixture into the dish.
5. In another bowl, combine pancake mix, flour, sugar, and melted margarine. Stir in milk. Quickly spoon this mixture over peach mixture. Combine nutmeg and brown sugar. Sprinkle mixture on top of batter.
6. Bake at 400° F for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and cut into 8 squares.

Yields: 8 servings **Serving Size:** 1 square
Each Serving Provides Calories: 151
Total Fat: less than 1 g Saturated Fat: less than 1 g
Cholesterol: 2 mg Sodium: 118 mg

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

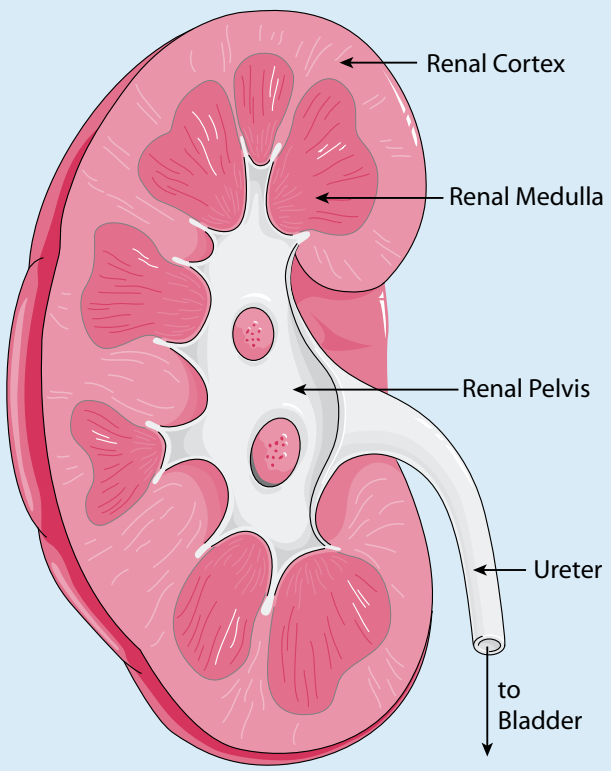
What is Chronic Kidney Disease?

Nadia Aslam, Pharmacy Student

The kidneys are organs that perform many important functions in the body. They regulate your body's fluids, chemicals, and electrolytes (such as sodium, potassium, phosphorus, and calcium.) Kidneys also help clear toxins and drugs from the body and help you eliminate wastes that are normally produced in the body. The kidneys also produce hormones that help make blood cells, maintain bones, and regulate blood pressure. If the kidneys are damaged, they can not effectively accomplish these tasks.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a worsening of kidney function over time. The stage of CKD is defined by the amount that the kidney can filter. It is normal for kidney function to decline as we age, however there are multiple stages of CKD and severe CKD can be serious. Eventually, the kidneys may become damaged enough where kidney (renal) failure may occur. Wastes are not eliminated from the body or the normal functions can not be carried out. Patients with this severe type of kidney failure may need renal replacement therapy (dialysis where the blood is filtered and cleaned by machine, or kidney transplant may be needed).

Diagram of Human Kidney



Risk factors

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes
- Elderly
- Family history of CKD or kidney problems
- Ethnicities that are prone to high blood pressure or diabetes African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians
- Certain drugs, diseases, or infections that may cause inflammation or damage to the kidneys

Complications associated with kidney disease or kidney failure

- Low blood count (anemia)
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Reduced appetite/poor nutrition (anorexia)
- Bone disease due to problems with calcium and phosphorus regulation
- Nervous system problems (neuropathy)
- Reduced well-being and functioning

Slowing the progression

Once CKD is diagnosed, the damage is irreversible, however there are steps you can take to delay the progression:

- Control the cause of the CKD
- Maintain blood pressure at <130/80 mmHg
- Control blood sugar
- Treat underlying causes like infection, systemic lupus, or cancer
- Talk to your provider about medications that can harm the kidneys
- Some blood pressure medications may help slow the progression of kidney damage
- If suggested by your healthcare provider, limiting protein in the diet may be helpful

Early detection and treatment is important to delay the progression of CKD, however some people may be at higher risk than others. CKD can be screened for with simple blood tests, urine collections, or sometimes imaging of the kidneys. Chronic kidney disease can be serious or fatal if it progresses to kidney failure. Talk to your health care provider for more information.

Vitamin D – You Are My Sunshine

Erika Deshmukh- Dietetic Intern, Nutrition and Food Services

Vitamin D is unique from any other nutrient. Our bodies actually make it with enough exposure to sunlight. However, the risk of skin cancer has most of us routinely applying sunscreen and wearing protective clothing. We can still meet our needs for this important nutrient if we are wise in choosing foods high in vitamin D content.

Vitamin D plays a major role in bone growth and mineralization. In fact, vitamin D maintains blood levels of calcium and serves to build strong, dense bones. It may also play a role in the prevention of many chronic diseases, including the risk of breast and colonic cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

Many factors contribute to vitamin D deficiency including:

- Darkness of skin – darker skin is less able to make vitamin D from the sun
- Lack of sunlight – many people live in areas that do not get enough sunlight, especially during winter months
- Use of sunscreen – this protects us from skin damage but also prevents us from making vitamin D
- Drinking non-fortified milk – few foods contain vitamin D naturally, thus milk, juices and cereals are often fortified. In the 1930s, milk fortification began in the United States to combat rickets, a disease caused by vitamin D deficiency

The best food source for vitamin D may be fortified milk. People who are lactose intolerant can drink fortified rice and soy milks. Vitamin D is also found in fatty fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines) and fortified cereals. Additionally, small amounts of vitamin D are in beef liver, cheese, and egg yolks.

Vitamin D deficiency in children results in rickets. Lack of this nutrient in adults may lead to osteomalacia or severe softening of the bones. Elderly people can get osteoporosis and fractures more often without enough vitamin D. As we grow older, we often eat less and our bodies are less able to make vitamin D from sunlight. Thus, it is very important to be aware of which foods are rich in vitamin D so that we can maintain good bone health.

Vitamin D recommendations (both men and women):

16-50 years – 200 IU* daily
51-70 years – 400 IU daily
70+ years – 600 IU daily
** IU= International Units, 100 IU = 2.5 micrograms*

Five to fifteen minutes of sunlight in the morning or late afternoon three times a week should provide the recommended amount of vitamin D for most adults and elderly. Of course, it is wise to cover up with protective clothing or sunscreen for longer times outside to prevent the damaging effects from too much exposure to UV rays.

There are two forms of vitamin D supplements. D2 (ergocalciferol) is plant based, whereas D3 (cholecalciferol) is fish based. Some evidence suggests that D3 is more effective than D2. However, there is also ample research that shows both work equally to raise vitamin D levels. Your provider may recommend supplements if you are not getting enough vitamin D from your diet. Taking more vitamin D than the recommended amount may have negative side effects- more is not always better, so check with your provider before taking any additional supplements.

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Advance Directives

- The use of dialysis and breathing machines
- If you want to be resuscitated if breathing or heartbeat stops
- The use of tube feeding
- Organ or tissue donation

This can help your doctor and your "health care agent" make decisions in the way you would want. If you don't have a "living will," decisions will be made for you based on what is known about you in general and about your values.

Advance directives are a way of making your voice heard when you can no longer speak. Advance directives are not just for the elderly. All people who desire to direct their medical care in the future should complete an advance directive. An advance directive does not mean, "do not treat." This is a common misperception and not correct. Of course, if you want it to mean do not treat, then that is something that your "health care agent" would need to know.

You are encouraged to discuss these issues with your primary provider and with your loved ones. If you wish to receive a copy of the VA Advance Directive form or wish assistance in completing the form, your provider can refer you to a social worker. If you have already completed an Advance Directive, please bring a copy with you to your next VA appointment so we can make it a part of your medical record.

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(831) 464-5519

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(209) 557-6200

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World Wide Web Address:
www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors! Carry your medication list with you at all times!

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in ***To Your Health*** feel free to contact:

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Tips for Healthy Living

- Lower the sodium. Rinse canned foods, such as tuna and canned beans, to remove some of the sodium.
- Drink lots of water.

www.smallstep.gov