



Introduction

# Living Successfully with Kidney Disease



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### About Kidney School

Welcome to the Kidney School Text Book! Kidney School will help you learn to take an active role in your health care decision making. Research suggests that kidney patients who become active partners in their care are more likely to live long and live well.

Kidney School is a program designed to help people understand kidney disease and its treatment, adjust to kidney disease, make good medical choices, and live as fully as possible. You decide which modules to read and when, so what you learn is entirely up to you.

Kidney School was developed to:

- Offer up-to-date, research-based information.
- Help you learn what to expect and what questions to ask.
- Provide the tools you need to self-manage your care so you can stay healthier and keep doing the activities you enjoy.

Kidney School was created by Medical Education Institute as a project of **Life Options**. Life Options is a program of research and research-based educational materials to help people with kidney disease live long and live well.

All Life Options programs, including Kidney School, are guided by the Life Options Rehabilitation Advisory Council (LORAC), a national expert panel of patients, doctors, nurses, researchers, social workers, dietitians, physical therapists, and administrators.

All content for the Life Options program and for Kidney School is developed by Life Options staff and reviewed by members of the multidisciplinary LORAC and by additional patients and kidney professionals. Life Options and Kidney School content is entirely independent of, and not

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**W**elcome to Kidney School! Your interest in this program probably means that you or someone close to you has been diagnosed with a kidney problem. If so, you are not alone.

You may be searching for information, encouragement, or hope to learn how to manage life with chronic kidney disease (CKD). If so, you've come to the right place.

You *can* live long and live well with kidney disease. Kidney School, offered by the Life Options Rehabilitation Program, is designed to help you learn how.

### **You hold the key that unlocks a long and fulfilling life.**

You or someone close to you has CKD and this means certain changes need to be made. But you can have a long, active, and meaningful life if you want it—and if you take your job seriously.

What job, you might be asking? I didn't ask for CKD. Why should I have to live with all of the changes and hassles that go along with it?

You're right, you didn't ask for this or deserve it. No one does. But now that you have been told you have CKD, you must understand that you are the one who can make the daily decisions that will help you stay as healthy as possible.



But wait a minute. What about the doctors and nurses who tell me what to do? Aren't they the experts? Shouldn't I listen to them?

Of course you should listen and consult with them as needed. Your care team is a vital part of managing your CKD. But they treat hundreds of patients and may only see you at clinic visits. Who then makes all of the *daily* decisions about food choices, taking medications, staying active, getting treatment, etc.?

### **The answer, of course, is you.**

You are the only one who can make those important daily decisions that add up to a healthy life for you or for those you're responsible for. This means that you need to become an expert on CKD.

You don't need to get a medical degree. Your job is to become an expert in how kidney disease affects you or your loved one. This means learning all you can about how kidneys work and what happens when they stop working, treatment options, medications, and so on.

Becoming an expert means looking for and absorbing information. And that is what Kidney School is all about: giving you accurate, useful, and interesting information that will help you to become your own expert.

In fact, hundreds of people who are living with kidney disease have told us that there are three Keys to a Long Life:

- *A positive attitude* – finding the good side of things
- *Getting answers* – asking questions, becoming an expert
- *Taking action* – following the treatment plan



## Intro – Living Successfully with Kidney Disease

Kidney School is organized into modules. Each module addresses an important topic that every non-medical CKD expert ought to know about. The modules are full of practical information that you can use every day. After you've gone through a module, you can take a short quiz to measure what you've learned.

You can read the modules in any order that interests you. We suggest that you start with Module 1—*Kidneys: How They Work, How They Fail, What You Can Do*. This module will give you an overview of kidney function and disease, and some very helpful ways to start sorting out your own life with CKD.

We at Kidney School want to help you feel confident about your knowledge, your life skills, and your ability to speak to your care team in an informed way. Most of all, we want to give you a sense of hope. We know many people with CKD who are living full and active lives. In our research, we've learned things from them that we will share with you in the Kidney School modules.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about Kidney School and hope to hear from you soon. You can reach us by email at [info@kidneyschool.org](mailto:info@kidneyschool.org).

### Please Note

Use of Kidney School does not replace the need to talk with your health care team about your care and your options.

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