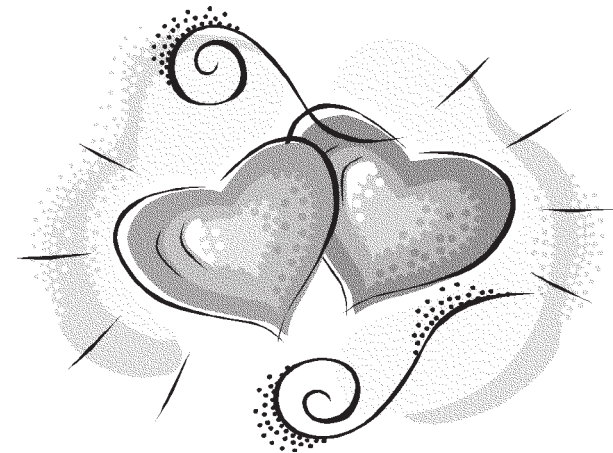
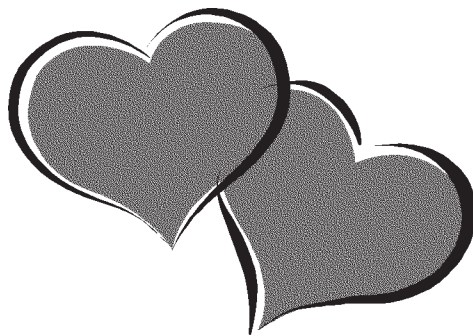




Living and Loving ...

**Some Questions and
Answers about Sexuality**





Notes and Questions . . .



Introduction

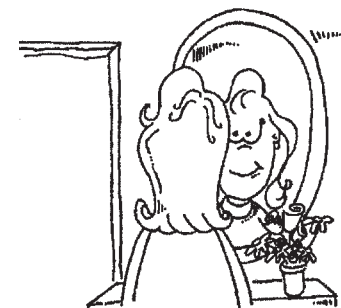
When you have kidney disease, there will be many changes in your daily routines. Some of these changes are due to the disease and the treatments you need. The changes are both physical and emotional. This book will help you learn more about the changes you may have when it comes to living and loving. Members of your Health Care Team can help if you want to talk about any of the information you read in this book.



How can I feel good about myself?

It is important to feel good when you look in the mirror. Keep your hair trimmed and styled. Women may want to wear makeup.

Dress neatly. Keep your clothes clean and fresh. Loose fitting shirts, blouses, and jackets may help hide a puffy look. You may want to consult a fashion expert about what looks good on you or ask for help when you shop for clothes.





What is safer sex?

Safer sex is a term used to remind people that they need to be aware that diseases can be passed by having sexual intercourse. When you practise safer sex, you use a condom during intercourse to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.



Who can I talk to?

You may have more questions.

You may want to talk with someone about how you feel. Your Health Care Team can help you. You can talk to your social worker, doctor, nurse, therapist or someone you trust.



The Hamilton Chapter of the Kidney Foundation also offers a Peer Support Program. You can meet with Peer Support Volunteers. Volunteers are people with kidney disease and family members who can help you and your family cope with the changes in your life. They can offer practical information and support. You can reach the Peer Support Program at 1-877-202-8222.



I am feeling tired, what can I do?

You may feel tired. The stress of treatments, the change in your diet and the medications can wear you out. You will need to learn to save your energy.

Here are some suggestions:

- Make a daily list of things to do, then do half of them. Leave some tasks for another day.
- When you have tasks that must be done, space them out over a day or week. Take breaks between tasks.
- Let someone else help you with some of the work.
- Look for easier ways to do things. An occupational therapist can help you with this.
- Take 1 or 2 rest breaks a day when you can.



- Listen to the cues your body is sending you. Before you feel really tired, stop and rest. Do not push yourself too hard. Take time to "recharge your batteries" and get your energy back. Plan quiet times for reading or listening to relaxation tapes in your day.



- Find out what your best time of day is. It may be right after dialysis or the next day. Plan to spend more time with your spouse, partner or friend on your high-energy days.
- Encourage your spouse, partner or friend to have a girls or guys night out with other friends. You can rest and he or she keeps other friendships up. Maintain your own friendships too.



How do I tell my spouse, partner, family and friends how I feel?

You need to be honest with your spouse, partner, family and friends about the way you feel. They care about you. When you try to cope with the changes in your life, your friends and family can help if they know what you need. Talk to friends and family members you trust. Talk to them about your feelings and tell what they can do to help you.



Will I be able to have a child?

If you are thinking of having a baby, both men and women need to talk about it with their doctor first. ✕Do not stop taking birth control measures without talking to your doctor.

Women on dialysis may be fertile. This means that you **can get pregnant**, although you may miss your period sometimes. It is important **not to get pregnant** if you are on dialysis. You will miscarry after 3 or 4 months. This means that you will lose the baby. Pregnancy is not safe for your health. Make sure you talk to your doctor about the best way for you to prevent a pregnancy.

Men on dialysis may be fertile. This means that you can cause a pregnancy. Men wanting to have a child should talk to their doctor first. You will need to talk about the cause of your kidney disease and whether your child would have a chance of having the same problem. You may also need help to determine if you are fertile.

If you are a woman and have a transplant, your periods will probably return and you will feel better. You may feel strong enough to have a baby but you need to talk about the risks and advantages of pregnancy with your doctor.

Treatment for impotence depends on the cause. If your problem is emotional, counselling or sex therapy sessions can help. If you have a spouse or partner, you may have counselling together. If your problem is caused by a medication, your medication may be changed. If the problem is caused by hormones, you may be able to take a medication to boost your hormone levels.

There are also oral medications, injectable medications and surgical treatments to treat impotence.

Since there are so many causes of impotence, you should talk to your doctor about a plan for treatment.



Intercourse is dry and painful, what can I do?

Women may find that the vagina is dry caused by changes in hormone levels. K-Y Jelly® is a good lubricant to use. You can buy it at the drug store without a prescription. Using this jelly helps the penis go into the vagina without pain or discomfort.

Creams or other devices that contain estrogen may also be helpful. Talk to your doctor as you need a prescription for these.



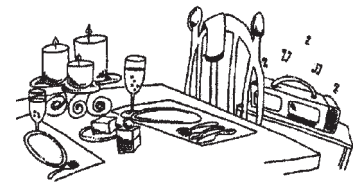
Can I be on dialysis and have intercourse?

Yes, you can. You will need to be careful with your dialysis access arm, peritoneal catheter or tunnelled catheter. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or nurse for advice. If you have had a kidney transplant, talk to your doctor or nurse for advice.

Your spouse or partner may be afraid of causing you harm. You can tell your spouse or partner that there is no reason to avoid intimacy. You may wish to continue as you did before kidney failure.

Here are some ideas that may help:

- ♥ Have sexual relations when you are rested.
- ♥ Find a comfortable position that suits you both.
- ♥ Use candles and soft music to help set the mood.
- ♥ Try touching and kissing to help your body get ready.
- ♥ Take a less dominant role to help you save energy, so sex is less tiring.
- ♥ Read a book on intimacy for ideas.





What about dating and meeting someone I like?

Meeting new people, dating and falling in love is important for many. Dating with kidney disease may be a challenge. It is often hard to decide when and how much to tell the person you are dating that you have kidney disease. Most experts agree that being honest is important. You may want to talk to a therapist for advice or read a book on the subject.

Here are some ways to approach dating:

- ♥ Plan activities and dates on your good days. If you do the asking, you can suggest a time that is best for you.
- ♥ Plan relaxing activities. Walks, plays, movies and shows can all be fun and not too tiring.
- ♥ Talk about things other than kidney disease. Ask questions about other people. Talk with them. Get to know them. You may find that you have a lot in common.
- ♥ If you are asked to dinner, offer to cook or make a meal together that you can both eat.



- ♥ Find restaurants where you can eat. Take your date out to dinner or suggest a place that you know you can order from the menu and stay on your diet.
- ♥ You may need to use a bit of imagination and some new ideas. You will find that it can be worth the effort.



What is impotence?

Impotence is a condition in which a man is not able to have an erection. There are many causes of impotence when on dialysis treatment:

- some medications
- low hormone levels
- being tired from kidney disease

How you are feeling is also an important factor. You may feel depressed or stressed by the changes in your life. You may have other problems with your spouse or partner. You may worry about your ability to please your spouse or partner. These feelings can get in the way of enjoying the time you spend with a person.