

## Kidney Disease and Working



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**Kidney and Urinary Program  
St. Joseph's Hospital  
Hamilton, Ontario**

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## Introduction

If you have kidney disease, you may have questions about keeping, changing, or finding a job. You may have problems adjusting your work life.



This book can help answer some questions and help you find ways to solve these problems. It may also be useful to your family and friends.

Kidney disease and the treatments may affect your ability to work in many ways. The time taken for dialysis treatments can interfere with your work schedule. You may feel tired due to changes in your body, anemia, or the side effects of medications. There are ways to cope with these problems. Many people with kidney disease work.

### When can I go back to work?

It is best for you to return to your normal routine as soon as you can. It is important to stay healthy and keep a positive outlook. Though you may want to return as soon as you can, sometimes going back to work too soon can cause new problems. If you are thinking of returning to work, speak with your doctor first.



## Telephone Numbers



Place	Hamilton	Brantford
Income Security (Canada Pension Plan-CPP)	905-572-2292	1-800-277-9914
Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP)	905-521-7280	519-756-5790
Ontario Works	905-526-4800	519-759-3330
CNIB	905-528-8555	519-752-6831
Peer Support Program (Kidney Foundation)	905-318-8627	1-877-202-8222

**For areas outside of Hamilton and Brantford look in your telephone directory.**

**At St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton you may also contact:**

- Social Worker Department: 905-522-1155, ext. 33101
- Spiritual Care Department: 905-522-1155, ext. 33263
- Occupational Therapy Department: 905-522-1155 ext. 33306

## The Peer Support Program

The Peer Support Program offers one to one help to those whose lives have been affected by renal disease. These trained volunteers, through their own experience, have an understanding of what you are going through.



There are also monthly information meetings and guest speakers on various topics related to kidney disease held at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton.

For more information call:

- 1-877-202-8222
- Kidney Foundation Hamilton and District Chapter at 905-318-8627



## What if I cannot do my old job?

Kidney disease causes many changes in your body. It may be hard for you to do your job as before. You can choose to discuss other options with your employer. Part-time rather than full-time hours, job sharing and modified duties are things to think about. You may find it helpful to call your Human Resources or Personnel office for advice. If you belong to a union, talk to your local representative.

Members of the health care team can work with you and your employer. They can help you manage a job change. For example, some people do peritoneal dialysis at their jobs.

If you are self-employed or work at home, the health care team can help you adjust your job or get the help you need to keep working.



## What about training or retraining?

Training or retraining programs are worth thinking about. These are provided by Employment Canada, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, March of Dimes, and CNIB. Other employment and placement agencies are also available. The Board of Education offers many classes in adult education. Your Social Worker or Occupational Therapist can help you decide on the best program for you.

## What do I tell my employer about my medical condition?

You need to be honest about what has happened to you. Be positive about what you can do.

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that you have the right to equal treatment with respect to employment.

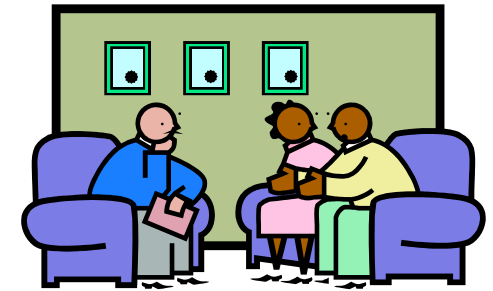
This means that your kidney disease cannot be used to discriminate against you.



Losing a job can cause changes in your finances and status. This can be stressful for you and your family. You may find that you feel depressed. It can help to share your feelings with someone close to you. During this time it is important that you keep a positive outlook. Your family can help you cope with the changes in your lives.

A major change in your life can raise questions such as why me? or where is a God? It can also create feelings of anger, loss, grief and frustration. A Chaplain can talk to you about your spiritual questions and offer support for the feelings you have.

Your Social Worker, members of the Kidney and Urinary Team and Chaplain understand the problems you may face. They will help you and your family manage these problems.



## What if I get a kidney transplant?

After a time period set by you and your doctor, you should be able to return to work. If you are getting a disability pension, it will not stop right away with a transplant. In time, your pension status will be reviewed. Some people stay on a disability pension while others return to work.



## What can I do to cope with the changes in my life?

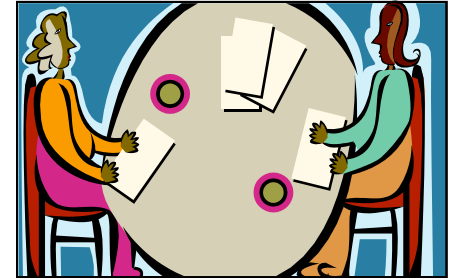
Kidney disease can cause physical, emotional and spiritual changes. Knowing what may happen and having people to talk to can make it easier to cope with the changes.



Employers cannot ask about your medical condition in a job interview. They can ask about any problems that may interfere with your duties.

Staff at St. Joseph's Hospital can help you talk to your employer. If you would like some help, talk to your Social Worker.

## What should I talk over with my employer?



It is important to talk about issues that are important to you. Some of these may include:

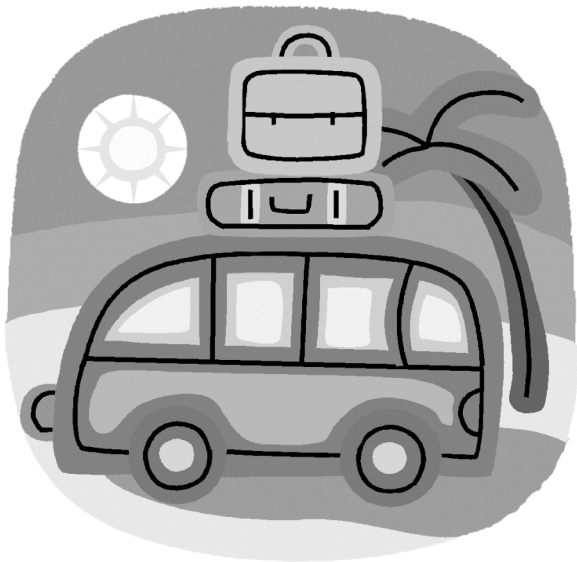
- Health care insurance benefits
- Sick time
- Leaves of absence and return to work
- Job policies
- Emergency procedures

Your Social Worker can help you plan your interview. Together, you can go over topics you feel are important.

## What if I do not feel ready to return to work right away?

You may not feel ready to return to work right away. You may need some extra time off while you adjust to changes in your life. If you have paid into the Canada Pension Plan you should be able to get Sickness Benefits from Unemployment Insurance.

Some employers have sick time, short-term, and long-term disability plans. Look into these plans with your employer or union. Using vacation time or taking a leave of absence can sometimes be arranged.



## What if I cannot go back to my old job or I am unemployed?

You may not be able to work full-time or part-time. If you have paid into the Canada Pension Plan and meet certain rules you should be able to get a Disability Pension.

If you have not worked, you may be able to get a Disability Pension from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Your Regional Social Services can help you obtain financial aid right away or help bridge the gap between programs. Your Social Worker can help you decide where to apply for financial aid.

You may wish to return to school to upgrade your skills. This can help your chances of finding a job.

Your Social Worker can help you find a program that suits your needs.

Your Social Worker can also put you in touch with sources of financial aid to help you return to school.

