



Best Practices for Managing the Symptoms of End-Stage Kidney Disease

The symptoms of end-stage kidney disease *can* be managed, and the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual suffering of this stage of illness *can* be reduced. The resources below will improve clinicians' knowledge of best management for patients with end-stage kidney disease, whether they are receiving renal replacement therapy or comprehensive conservative management.

Best Practice #1: Nurture a Shared Decision-Making Relationship

- ASK patients about their goals and concerns.
- INFORM them about their options and prognosis.
- HELP them choose care that supports their goals and values.

Resources:

- Renal Physicians Association [*Shared Decision-Making in the Appropriate Initiation of and Withdrawal from Dialysis: Clinical Practice Guidelines 2nd edition*](#) (free to download at www.renalmd.org)
- [*Estimating prognosis for dialysis patients*](#), an online tool
- The National Kidney Foundation has a decision aid available online for patients and families: [*When Stopping Dialysis Treatment is Your Choice: A Guide for Patients and Their Families*](#)

Best Practice #2: Provide Meticulous Symptom Management

- ASSESS symptoms in all domains (physical, psychological, social, and spiritual) comprehensively, systematically, and regularly.
- ADDRESS symptoms in all domains with evidence-based treatment.

Resources:

- The CSCKP's [*web page for pain and symptom assessment and management*](#)
- [*Clinical Algorithm and Preferred Medications to Treat Pain in Dialysis Patients*](#)

- Kidney Health Australia’s [Decision Making and Symptom Control in End Stage Kidney Disease: KCAT Primary Care Workshop](#)
- Kendall C, Banks A. *Guidelines on Supportive Care, Symptom Control and End of Life Care for Renal Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease. Information for healthcare professionals. The Richard Bright Renal Services.* North Bristol NHS. NHS Trust. Version 5. October 2014.

Best Practice #3: Provide or Collaborate with Palliative/Supportive Care & Hospice

- COLLABORATE with palliative care and hospice colleagues to build shared expertise and capacity in renal supportive care.
- JOIN the [Coalition for Supportive Care of Kidney Patients](#) (free to join) to work with others devoted to changing the culture of kidney care in the United States.

Renal-specific palliative care (or supportive care) is more widely available in Europe, New Zealand, and Australia than in the U.S., but availability in the U.S. is growing.

Additional Resources

- The Coalition for Supportive Care of Kidney Patients (CSCKP) has numerous resources for professionals and for patients and families on its website at www.kidneysupportivecare.org. For professionals, CSCKP posts and continually updates [helpful references and tools](#) for managing end-of-life issues in chronic kidney disease.
- Holley JL, eds. Berns JS, Morrison RS, deputy ed. Sheridan MD. *Palliative care: End-stage renal disease.* Updated May 15, 2015. © 2015 Up To Date, Inc. Available at www.uptodate.com/contents/palliative-care-end-stage-renal-disease
- [Fast Facts and Concepts](#) are practical, peer-reviewed summaries on key topics important to palliative care clinicians and has many specific topics devoted to chronic kidney disease, including
 - # 161: *Opioid Use in Renal Failure*
 - # 191: *Prognostication in Patients Receiving Dialysis*
 - # 163: *Decision Making in Chronic Kidney Disease*
 - # 207: *Withdrawal of Dialysis and Decision Making*
 - # 208: *Clinical Care Following Withdrawal of Dialysis*

There are many other more general Fast Facts available which also apply to the care of patients with end-stage kidney disease including specific symptom management advice which generally lists dosage adjustment for reduced kidney function, how to conduct a family meeting, informed consent, and others. These are available at <https://www.capc.org/fast-facts/>.

- Cohen, L et al (2006) Renal palliative care. *J Palliat Care*;9:4, 977-992
- Chambers EJ, Brown EA, Germain MJ, eds. Supportive Care for the Renal Patient, 2nd ed. Oxford U Press 2010
- Brown MA, Crail SM. ANZSN Renal Supportive Care Guidelines. *Nephrology* 18(2013)401-454
- Patient decision aid from Kidney Health Australia: [*A decision aid for the treatment of kidney disease: My Kidneys My Choice*](#)
- Patient educational material from Kidney Health Australia: Askew J, Zisos H, Moustakas J. [*Supportive Care for Kidney Disease: Information for patients, carers, and their families.*](#) © December 2009