



October 2018

connect

Supermum donates her kidney

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Foreword

Thank you for your strong support in helping kidney patients lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

While we provide dialysis treatment and holistic care to help kidney failure patients cope with their debilitating illness, it is crucial that we continue to promote kidney transplant as it offers a kidney patient the best long term solution and quality of life.

In this regard, we are happy to share that NKF has made enhancements to our Kidney Live Donor Support Fund to boost the uptake of live kidney donation, which you can read more about in this newsletter.

“Donating one’s kidney is a difficult decision. Many issues are involved,” said Tim Oei, NKF’s CEO. “Our scheme is not intended to ‘enrich’ the living donor but rather to assure them that pre and post-transplant related medical charges will be taken care of by us. With the funding enhancement, in particular the pre-transplant screening costs, we hope to provide ease to both kidney recipient and donor by removing their very first barrier and financial concern.”

In our  **Cover Feature**, we highlight the story of sixty-year-old Madam Ng Sai Pheng, one of the beneficiaries of the Fund. Madam Ng willingly and wholeheartedly gave her kidney to her son William, 32, last year. When you read her story, you will be moved by a mother’s love for her son to give him a new lease of life.

We also cover the story of peritoneal dialysis patient Madam Ivy Tan in  **A Closer Look** and how she has turned her life around after her world came crashing down when she was first diagnosed with kidney failure. Today, she is making the most out of her life and finds strength and comfort from her husband and companionship from her two dogs.

As you read the other stories, interspersed with diet and exercise tips to benefit you, you will realise why we strive to work hand-in-hand with the community to prevent kidney disease. We want to help every Singaporean to spend time to think about their kidney health, not to take it for granted and take proactive steps in keeping kidney disease at bay.

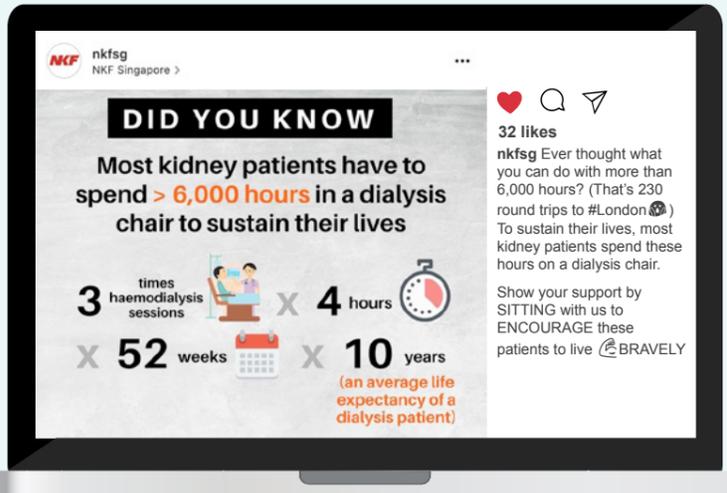
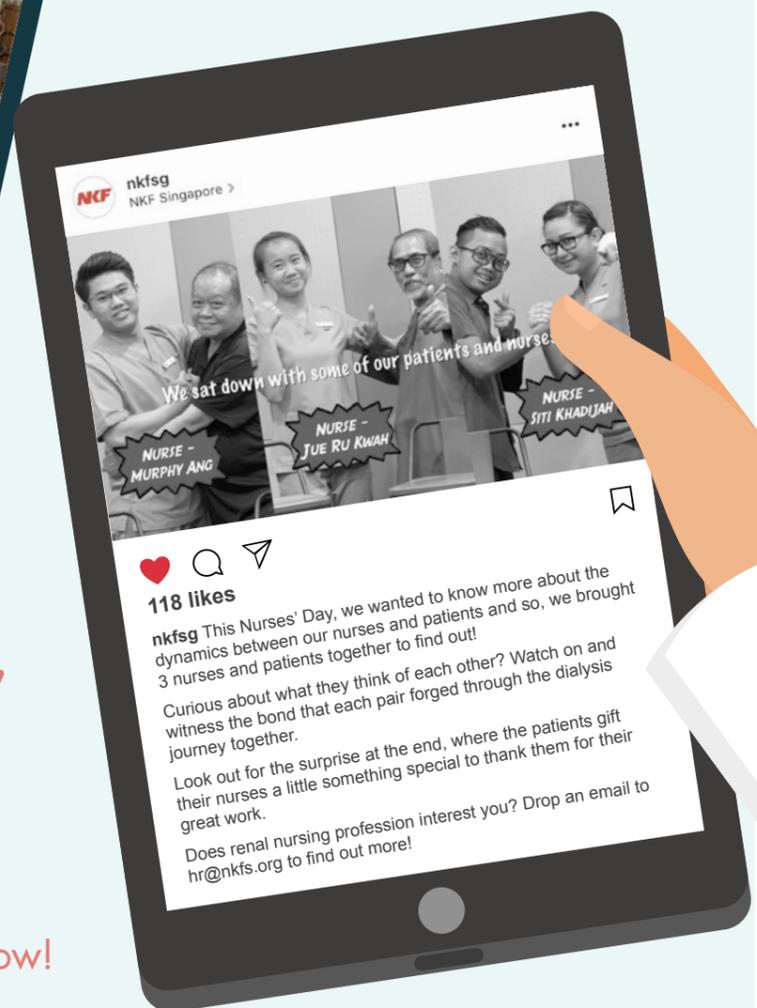
We look forward to our continued partnership as we do our best to help kidney patients as well as engage and empower people to take care of their kidney health for a more resilient and healthier nation.

The Editorial Team

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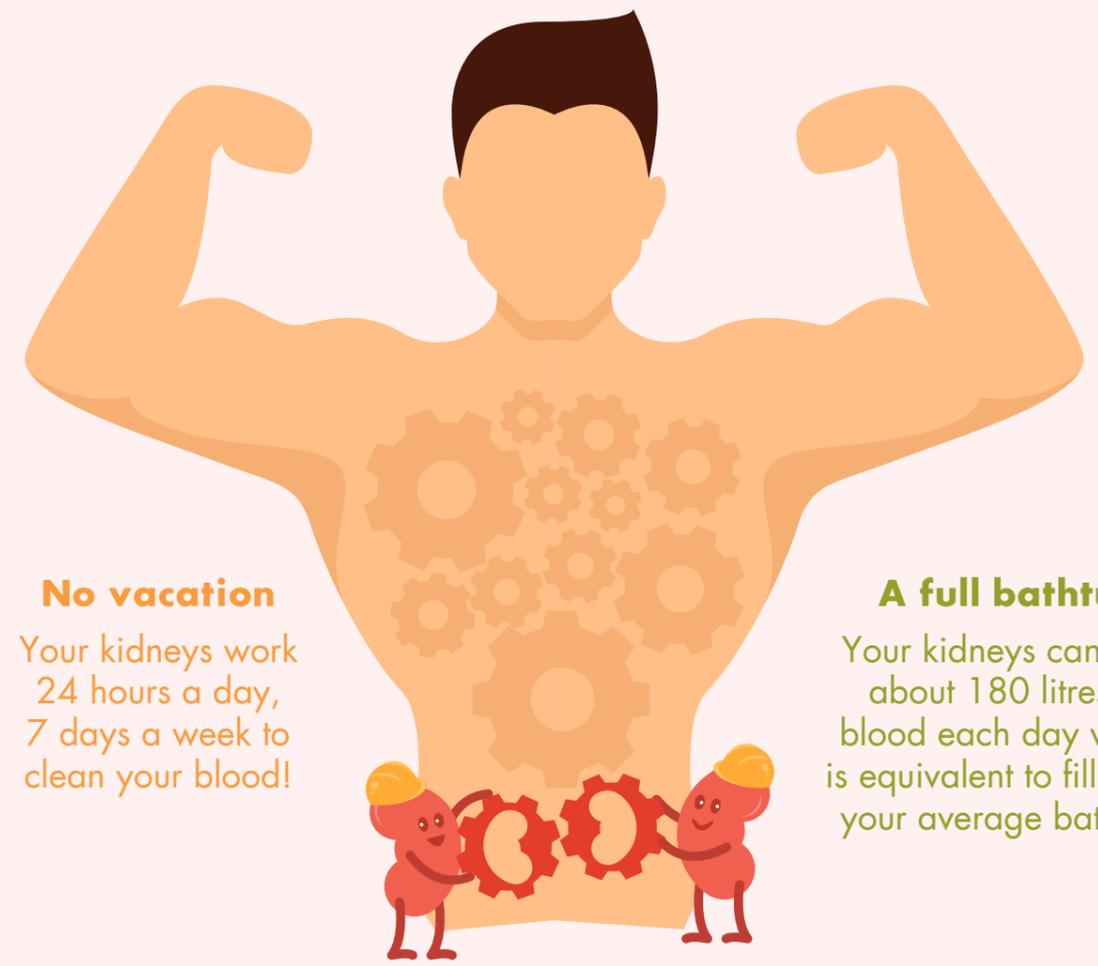


#NKFSG

Follow us on and now!

Do you know how amazing your kidneys are?

Our kidneys keep our body composition normal – they remove wastes and excess fluid, regulate the body's salt, potassium and acid content, control blood pressure, regulate hormones to stimulate red blood cells production and keep bones strong!



No vacation
Your kidneys work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to clean your blood!

A full bathtub
Your kidneys can filter about 180 litres of blood each day which is equivalent to filling up your average bathtub!

1 million nephrons, 16 km long

Each kidney has about 1 million nephrons, which help to filter the body's entire blood supply. If the nephrons in both kidneys are taken out and placed end-to-end horizontally, they will cover a distance of 16 kilometres!



Sit-A-Thon NKF

To increase public awareness of the negative consequences of kidney failure so that people will not take their kidney health for granted, NKF organised the Sit-A-Thon where participants were confined to a chair for four hours, to learn more about the thrice-weekly, four-hour dialysis sessions which kidney patients go through. The event also highlighted the fact that kidney transplant is the best solution to kidney failure.



Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health (centre) and Mr Tim Oei, NKF CEO turning off the dialysis machine, signifying a new lease of life through kidney transplant. Together with them are kidney recipients and donors (left of machine) and the NKF team (right of machine).

Did you know?

Kidney patients...

- ... have to spend more than **6,000 hours** in a dialysis chair to sustain their lives.
- ... eventually stop producing urine so fluids in the body can only be removed during dialysis. Hence, patients have to limit their water intake including fluids from ice-cream and even ice cubes to only **500ml per day**.

Needle used for dialysis 2mm

Needle used for drawing blood 1mm

Satay stick 2mm

Actual size



“I fear the needle poke each time”

Newly diagnosed kidney failure patients are required to go through a procedure to connect an artery and vein to create a fistula (vascular access) to allow large flow of blood to carry out haemodialysis. The fistula takes about three months to mature before it can be used for dialysis. Meanwhile, to sustain lives, a permanent catheter — to exchange blood to and from a haemodialysis machine and a patient — is placed under the skin along the upper chest under the collar bone to allow for immediate dialysis treatment.

“I started dialysis two years ago. As I often suffer frequent clotted access due to my narrow veins, the quality of my dialysis treatments were affected. I was hospitalised seven times, and warded up to three days each time, in my first year of dialysis.

I started dialysis on my left arm but my vein was narrow, so I had to undergo the procedure to connect my artery and vein three times without any success. Eventually, the entire left arm was deemed unsuitable for dialysis. I also underwent the same procedure on my right arm. However, I was hospitalised multiple times due to persistent clotted access issue. It was torturous.

Thankfully, my condition has improved tremendously over the years, although I require longer hours of dialysis as the condition of my veins are not ideal.

Each dialysis session lasts about four-and-a-half hours. I often suffer from leg cramps and fatigue from sitting down for too long. I frequently check with the nurse if it is possible to end my dialysis session earlier. It would be good even if it is just 15 minutes earlier.”

Chan Why Fun, 66

Bringing love

learning about life

Students from the Raffles Institution's Red Cross Youth (RI Chapter) have been volunteering at NKF's dialysis centres in different groups of 5 to 10 since February last year on Monday evenings. They befriend patients, do chairside handicrafts such as mosaic art and play simple games as part of patients' rehabilitation therapy. These caring young volunteers have found these interactive sessions not only beneficial to the patients but an important part of learning in their journey of life.



One auntie was always so full of happiness and bubbly whenever she saw us. Regrettably, she passed on a few months later. It made me realise how fleeting life can be. It was a joy to spend time with her nearing her last moments.

Ms Chok Li Qin Anthonia
volunteer

A real eye-opener to the struggles of kidney patients. They have so many restrictions in their mobility and diets and I admire their strength for powering through each day. I am happy that through small things, we did manage to bring a smile to their faces.

Ms Jasveena Gaya
volunteer

It was not just us who were brightening up the patients' days – the patients also helped bring a smile to our faces whenever we saw them, with not just their humour, but also the appreciation they showed towards us.

Mr Ho Shu Hao Eugene
volunteer

I was able to share my hardships with them (volunteers) and they provided me with words of support and comfort which helped calm me a lot.

Mr Ong Jik San
patient

To find out more about our volunteer programmes, please contact volunteer@nkfs.org



Supermum donates her kidney

Madam Ng Sai Pheng, 60, wakes up at 4.30am to cook and pack lunch for herself and her son to take to work before heading to her workplace where she works as a drink stall supervisor. To earn a little more, she works on Sundays at a fast food restaurant. She is a single parent of three grown up children and have been taking care of them since young.

“I would do anything to save my son.”

Sai Pheng



A mother's unconditional love

However, for Madam Ng, a mother's love goes far beyond the ordinary. She gave her eldest child, William, the ultimate gift of life – her kidney. The successful transplant took place on 30 August 2017. More than a year on, both mother and son are doing well. William, 32, who is also diabetic and visually impaired in his left eye, is now living a life free of dialysis.

Putting up a brave front

When William was diagnosed with kidney failure around September 2016, Madam Ng put on a brave front as William was still in denial and was not prepared for dialysis. Hiding her countless worries, she encouraged him to go for treatment, even though she constantly broke down in her room. “My son had never seen me cry,” she confessed.

During a consultation session with William's doctor, his doctor asked if he had considered a kidney transplant. It could take up to nine years if he was put on the waiting list to receive a kidney from a deceased donor. William's doctor asked if they had any suitable living donor in mind or if anyone had come forward to donate his or her kidney. Without hesitation, Madam Ng said, “I would do anything to save my son.”

William, who works as a training and development manager, had the support and understanding of his boss, more so as his boss' father was a kidney transplant recipient. Madam Ng's superiors were also very supportive, enabling her to take leave and recuperate post-surgery.

A suitable match

Madam Ng underwent a full body check-up to ensure her kidney was suitable for transplant and that she was fit enough to undergo the procedure. Although she and William had different blood types, Madam Ng was ecstatic to learn that she was a suitable match. “All I wished for was for the surgery to be a success and William to regain his health,” said Madam Ng. She even delayed her knee surgery and endured the pain for one year just to go through the transplant for her son's sake.



Back to normal

Since the transplant, William has slowly resumed his active lifestyle like moderate hiking at MacRitchie Reservoir and hopes to start working out at the gym soon. He now watches his diet, eating less rice and going for sugar-free drinks. He also hopes to do volunteer work in the social service sector as he wants to make an impact in people's lives because of his own experience.

As for Madam Ng, two days after being discharged, she was up and about doing her grocery shopping in the market and soon back at work. Mother and son also go for regular strolls or scooting around parks as a form of light exercise and bonding.

William summed up his feelings for his mother, "She is a supermum!"

More assistance to promote live kidney transplant

NKF will reimburse pre-transplant screening and evaluation costs for up to two potential donors per kidney recipient to boost the uptake of live kidney donation. All potential kidney donors are required to undergo a series of thorough matching tests as prescribed by the restructured hospitals - around \$2,000 to \$3,500 during the evaluation process to ascertain if she or he is a suitable kidney donor. The reimbursement of the screening and evaluation costs aims to remove the first barrier and any financial concern a potential kidney donor may have.

To further encourage live kidney transplant, only the recipient is required to pass the means test instead of both recipient and donor under its current funding eligibility. NKF will also cover one-time reimbursement for loss of two months actual income or \$8,500 whichever is lower, from \$5,000 previously. The enhancements will take effect from 1 November 2018.

We will also be intensifying our initiatives to encourage more live kidney donations at all our dialysis centres. One of which is to empower nurses to initiate conversations and encourage discussions amongst patients and family members, whilst at the same time to clarify any doubts and misconceptions patients and caregivers may have about kidney transplant.

About Kidney Live Donor Support Fund

The Fund covers the costs of annual health screenings and medical follow-ups; reimbursement of hospitalisation and surgical insurance premiums; and insurance coverage for the Group Living Policy, for which NKF has doubled the sum insured to \$200,000. Thus far, 39 beneficiaries have received support from the Fund.



Read our uplifting kidney transplant stories at <http://bit.do/kidneytransplantstories> and see the hope you are giving to kidney patients to receive a new lease of life.

Are kidney disease and kidney failure the same thing?

Ong Zhenya

Dear Zhenya

"Kidney disease" does not equate to "kidney failure". "Kidney disease" is a general term used to describe different types of diseases related to the kidneys. Chronic kidney disease is a progressive disease. Most patients with chronic kidney disease can prevent a deterioration of their conditions and lead normal lives through managing their diet and taking their medication. Hence, not all patients with kidney disease need to go for dialysis.

However, if you have kidney failure, it means that 90% or more of your kidney function is lost and your kidneys are unable to maintain the normal composition of body fluids, resulting in the accumulation of toxins in the body. At this stage, you will need to depend on dialysis or transplant for survival. This also highlights how crucial it is to identify the early warning signs of kidney failure and take steps to protect your kidneys.

Find out more at <http://bit.do/kidneyfailure>



Can obesity lead to kidney failure?

Mohammad Sharul

Dear Sharul

Obesity leads to diabetes and high blood pressure, among other chronic diseases, both of which are the two leading causes of kidney failure. Causes include poor diet/food choices, lack of exercise, a family history of being overweight or obese and negative emotions like boredom sadness, or anger, which may influence eating habits.

Some ways to watch your weight:

- Brisk walk 30 minutes each time, 150 minutes per week
- Jog or swim three times a week
- Keep a food diary of everything you eat
- Shop from a list and do not shop when you are hungry
- Grill, bake or steam instead of deep-frying
- Use healthier cooking oils like canola, sunflower or peanut

You may speak to your healthcare provider to help you plan your diet, exercise and behaviour modification.

Have a question concerning your kidneys?



Have your concerns addressed by our in-house doctor,
Dr Mooppil Nandakumar, Director of Medical Services

contact_us@nkfs.org

(with subject header - Q&A) and the selected question/s will be answered and published in the next issue.



Even in sickness, I want to share with others

Ms Jasmine Lim, 50, joined the NKF's monthly donation scheme LifeDrops 22 years ago. In spite of her own struggles, she continues to do so till today because she wants to give kidney patients a chance to live.

“I was moved by an appeal letter from NKF in 1996 of the plight of a needy kidney patient who went through many struggles and suffering. Although I was not earning much in my customer service job, I wanted to help as much as possible so I decided to make a monthly donation of \$5. It is a gift from my heart and my own small way of helping. When many others give too, no matter what the amount, it all adds up to give life to kidney patients.

A few years back I was diagnosed with breast cancer and went through chemotherapy. Thankfully, my cancer has been in remission. It all the more made me realise the pain and anguish a patient goes through when stricken with an illness and how important it is to get support from those around you. My cancer was short term but for kidney patients, dialysis is lifelong. Although I am not working now, I still continue to donate. We can show our love for the less fortunate in many ways. That is why I also give my time by volunteering at a non-profit organisation.”

“We can all help in our own ways and as much as we can... every drop in the ocean counts.”

Jasmine

You can support too!

Visit <http://bit.do/make-a-donation>



“I enjoy my work in making lives better!”

Ms Jieyi Sng, 24, joined NKF as a nurse in August 2017 fresh out of university. More than a year on, she is enjoying her work. She says that despite the challenges, she finds it worthwhile and fulfilling, especially in seeing the positive impact she is making in the lives of kidney patients.

Why did you pursue a career in nursing?

I studied pharmacy at Ngee Ann Polytechnic and received my diploma in 2014. However, I always enjoy interacting with people, so I made the switch to pursue the nursing profession which would give me this opportunity and graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Nursing) from the National University of Singapore in 2017.

Any experiences that stand out?

During dialysis sessions, some patients' blood pressure may be low and there is a need to draw out less water from the body. There are patients who are resistant to this as they rather have more water drawn out as it gives them leeway to eat and drink more, which is actually not good for them. So they get angry. I just stay calm and emphasise to them the consequences. I'm still learning to deal with different kinds of patients in different situations. I'm grateful for the support from the senior nurses.

Have you created bonds with the patients?

When I'm on holiday, they will ask other nurses where I went and when I'm coming back. When I return to work, they ask me about my trip. For them, coming for dialysis every other day is not an easy thing to do. They find friendship in the nurses. Many of the patients are elderly and I feel like they are my own grandparents.

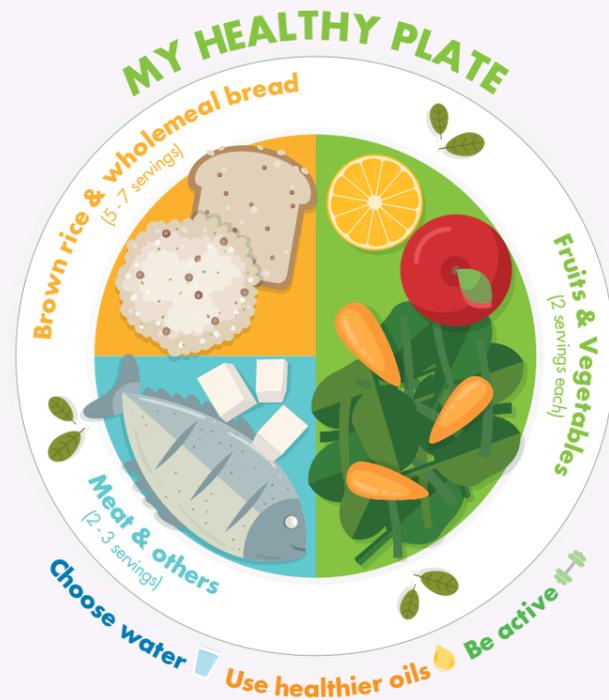
If you, or someone you know, is keen to join NKF for a rewarding and enriching profession in renal care, please contact hr@nkfs.org

Would you encourage others to join renal nursing?

Why not? When I meet up with my nursing friends in the healthcare sector, I share with them stories about my interaction with patients and the positive feeling I have. When I want to do something, I want to be good at it by specialising in it (renal nursing). They can sense it... my passion and fulfilment working here. Perhaps it's a trigger for them!

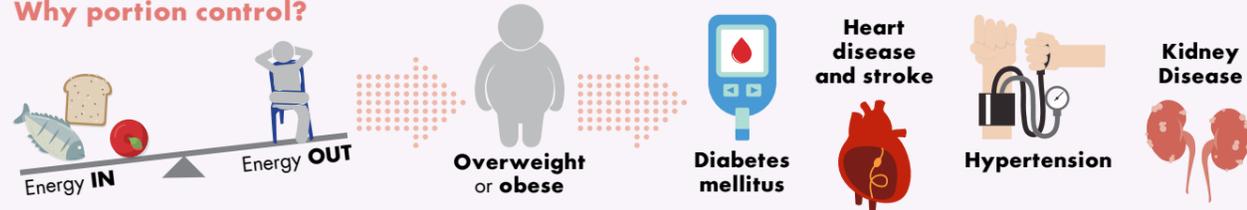


Portion control - you can do it!



Studies suggest that increased portion size and decreased physical activity leads to greater chance of obesity — a leading cause of many lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. Do you know that you can better manage your weight without starving yourself? All it takes is just a balanced diet with the right portion.

Why portion control?



What's a portion?

1 cupped hand = 1/2 bowl

1 palm = 90g

1 fist = 3/4 mug (100g)

Carbohydrates
Rice, noodles, beehoon, pasta

Protein
Fish, lean meat

Cooked vegetables



Strengthen your muscles for lower back pain!

The main causes of lower back pain are muscle imbalance and poor posture. To strengthen lower back, you may perform the following exercises:

Bridging

Knees bent at 90 degrees, back neutral, engage core.



Raise hips till aligned with knees and shoulders.



Hold for 3 deep breaths. Slowly lower down.

4 or 2 point kneeling

Place hands directly below shoulders, align head and neck with your back.



Tighten abdominal muscles without moving spine or pelvis. Raise opposite arm & leg off the floor.



Hold for 3 deep breaths. Repeat other combination.

Perform these exercises for 1-3 sets of 15 repetitions. All exercises must be done in a slow, smooth, controlled manner. Progress gradually. Begin by doing 1 set, slowly increasing to 3 sets.

Did you know?

- 80% of the population will experience low back pain at some points in their lives.
- 68% believe their quality of life decreases as a result of their pain.

Source: global pain index 2017

To find out more, visit <http://bit.do/exercise-ready>





Being positive living simply



“My world came crashing down when I had kidney failure. But now, I do not let my illness pull me down.”

Ivy

Madam Ivy Tan takes her two dogs for a walk daily and likes to travel to nearby places in Malaysia like Genting Highlands and Malacca. The 55-year-old, who was stricken with kidney failure last year, is on lifelong dialysis. Her husband and the company of her dogs give her the strength and courage to push on in life.

Finding support and comfort

Her husband, whom she married when she was 40, has stood by her. When she was too weak in the early months, he would bathe her and care for her. He works as a security guard to support the two of them. They have no children. She also finds being with her dogs therapeutic, giving her a sense of peace and calmness. She plays with them, go for walks with them and brings them along when she goes to the market. She said, “When I feel dizzy, my dogs can sense something is wrong. They will sit by me until I feel better and then walk away.”

Her diabetes led to kidney failure

She was diagnosed with diabetes in her early 40s and had been seeing a doctor to manage it. But her blood sugar levels kept going up in spite of the doctor increasing the dose of her medicine. Towards the end of 2016,

she found that she could not even walk 100m without feeling breathless and tired. Her legs were swollen and painful. When she saw the doctor, he sent her to the polyclinic, which referred her to hospital. On admission, she weighed 85kg. After a week, when the excess waste in her body had been drained, her weight fell to 69kg. She also suffers from high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart problem and poor eyesight in her right eye. Her heart condition prevents her from having a kidney transplant. Hence, she has no choice but to go on dialysis.

Opted for peritoneal dialysis

Madam Tan is the third generation in her family to suffer from kidney failure. Her father, who passed on at the age of 63, and her grandfather also lost the use of their kidneys due to diabetes. Like her father, she chose peritoneal dialysis (PD), a home-based treatment. She does her daily dialysis overnight for 10 hours while she sleeps with the help of a machine. This gives her greater convenience as she does not have to travel to and from a dialysis centre thrice weekly. PD also allows her to eat and drink more freely than if she had to go on haemodialysis (HD) as excess fluid and toxins are cleared from her body every day. She also receives support from NKF’s nurses, an exercise specialist and dietitian who visit her home to help in her rehabilitation.

Making the most out of life

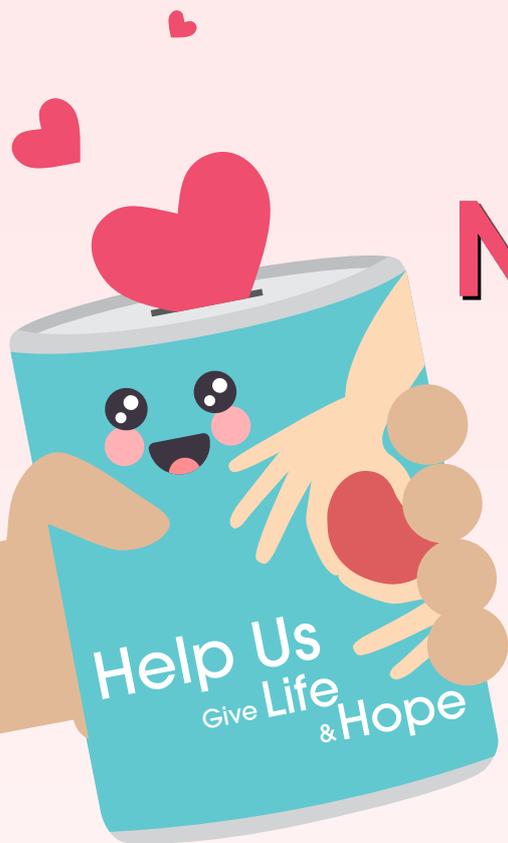
Madam Tan participates in NKF’s PD Support Group where she encourages fellow patients by sharing her experiences in coping with her illness and providing a listening ear to them. On PD for almost two years, she still enjoys her life. She said, “No point worrying. Enjoy while you can and try to make the most out of your life.”

Our PD Community Support Programme provides a spectrum of holistic care.

Contact us at
pd.support@nkfs.org

Volunteer at NKF FLAG DAY!

17 Nov 2018, Sat • 8am - 6pm

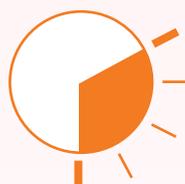
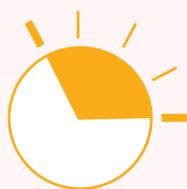


Have **FUN**
With **FAMILY**
And **FRIENDS**



1,600
tin-bearers
needed
at various
locations
island-wide

Three shifts to choose from
8am-12pm 11am-3pm 2pm-6pm



Spread the word!
#NKFflagday

Rally your family
and friends to join
us or help us to
spread the word

SIGN UP NOW!



<http://bit.do/NKFflagday2018>



1800-KIDNEYS (5436397)



volunteer@nkfs.org

All street collection volunteers must be 15 years old and above.