

The National Kidney Foundation

**NKF**

# nkf connect

November 2019



A publication of The National Kidney Foundation



**2019** has been an eventful year for NKF as we celebrate our 50-year journey of giving life and hope. As we approach the end of the year, we take stock and reflect on what we have achieved, what can be done better and differently, and what impact we bring to the community and the patients we serve. More importantly, we need to be aware of the challenges that lie ahead and prepare ourselves for a better future.

Diabetes remains the number one cause of kidney failure. It accounts for 67% of new cases of kidney failure. With the growing number of diabetics and kidney patients, we need to redouble our efforts in carrying out upstream work.

When reading Mr Lee Keng Huat's story (page 8 and 9), he shared his regrets about not having taken his doctor's advice regarding the management of his diabetes, which eventually led to his kidneys failing. His story is a familiar one – many diabetic and hypertensive patients do not display any symptoms of kidney disease until it is too late.

Tackling kidney failure and its leading cause – diabetes – in an ethnically diverse population such as Singapore's can be challenging due to the different lifestyles, cultures and social circles amongst the different races. Contributing factors include traditional methods of cooking such as deep frying, unhealthy ingredients, and eating and lifestyle habits. Efforts to tackle and reverse these problems will take time and require action on multiple fronts but it is not impossible.

I hope that you enjoy reading about the various initiatives that we have taken to address risk factors such as unhealthy dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles. Our new kidney health education bus, K-MOVEAT, has been making its rounds to spread the word to youths in secondary schools and tertiary institutions. At our recent Sit-A-Thon, we reached out to 10,000 members of the public to promote kidney health awareness and prompted them to reflect upon how their current lifestyles may lead to them facing grave repercussions later on.

I firmly believe that knowledge is power. We at NKF witness first-hand the staggering toll that kidney failure takes on patients, caregivers and families. Share information with your loved ones and encourage one another to make positive changes to consumption habits. Together, we can make a change.

**Tim Oei**  
Chief Executive Officer



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**Volunteer**



**Donate**



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 **contact\_us@nkfs.org**

 **www.nkfs.org**



# What seat did you choose?

**10,000** participants learnt about the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle and how unhealthy dietary choices may increase the risks of developing kidney failure at this year's Sit-A-Thon. Held at Our Tampines Hub on the 24 and 25 of August 2019, members of the public participated in many meaningful games and activities that involved sitting on "seats" such as stationary bikes, bean bags and dialysis chairs. Kidney ambassadors, who are our very own patient volunteers, also sat down with participants to share about living with kidney failure.

We also successfully entered the Singapore Book of Records for the most number of Sit-to-Stand repetitions performed by an individual in a minute, and the most number of repetitions accumulated by all participants in 8 hours.

Here are the highlights of the event.



Guest-of-Honour Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education launching K-MOVEAT together with Mr Koh Poh Tiong, Chairman of NKF (2nd from left) and Mr Tim Oei (1st from left).



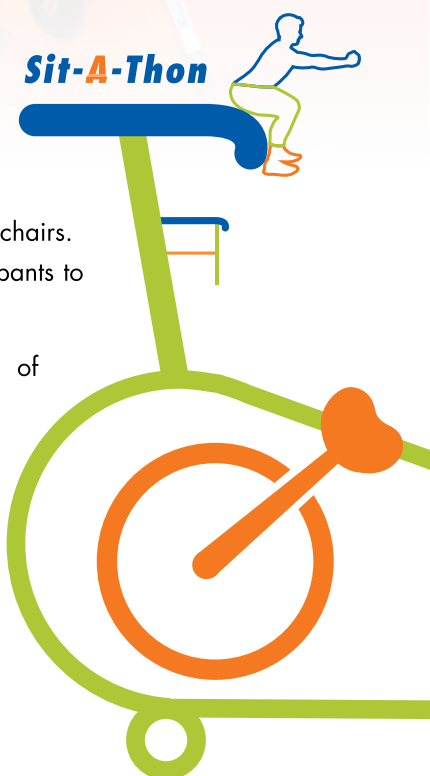
Our kidney ambassador sharing preventive health tips with a young boy.



Mr Ong Ye Kung learns about living with kidney failure from our kidney ambassadors at Sit-to-Speak.



Members of the public challenging Team Strong Silvers, a fitness group formed by senior citizens, to Sit-to-Stand.



# Dangers of uncontrolled diabetes

**D**iabetes is a disease that will affect you from top to toe. Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to blindness, heart attack, amputation and damage to the kidneys. In fact, uncontrolled diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure in Singapore. However, not all diabetics will have kidney failure. With medication and a strict adherence to a healthy, well-balanced diet, the risks of developing kidney failure are reduced.

Uncontrolled diabetes may accelerate the deterioration of the kidneys due to the following:

- High blood sugar makes your kidneys work harder
- This may damage the tiny filtering units (nephrons) in your kidneys in the long run
- Your kidneys begin to leak protein (albumin) into your urine instead of keeping it in your blood
- The damage is permanent and gets worse with time, leading to more fluid and toxic wastes staying in the blood instead of being passed out into your urine

did you know?

**World Diabetes Day creates awareness on diabetes as a serious health concern globally and is held on 14 November each year. Diabetes is largely treatable and preventable. Protect your loved ones by reminding them to be mindful of their daily sugar intake and to go for regular health screenings.**



**O**ur students were given the opportunity to play with virtual food and sports by using game-based learning strategies during our Health Week. In this way, they gained knowledge about nutrition and kidney health in a fun and interactive environment.

**Mr Lee Kok Leong**

Subject Head for Physical Education at Bukit Batok Secondary School, the first school K-MOVEAT visited

# Hungry kidneys on the move



**K**-MOVEAT is NKF's new Kidney Health Education Bus that is powered by augmented reality (AR) technology to elevate students' exploration and learning experience of kidney health. The bus is designed like a food truck and the NKF SG app brings the café-like interior of the bus to life. Students can interact with their environment and objects by simply pointing the smartphone or tablet at them.

K-MOVEAT aims to inculcate healthy eating and lifestyle habits in the young by bringing preventive healthcare to the doorsteps of tertiary schools and institutions. NKF's first kidney health bus K-Force, which was launched in 2014, reaches out to primary school students.

## Education & Prevention Programmes

Join us as we journey towards a healthier lifestyle through various complimentary awareness programmes catered just for you.

### For Community & Corporate

Kidney Discovery Centre  
Kidney Talks/Workshops  
Kidney Booths  
Kidney Health Education Bus

### For Schools

Kidney Discovery Centre  
Kidney Education Talks  
Kidney Health Booths  
Kidney Health Education Bus  
Little/Young Champs

For bookings and enquiries, please email us at [contact\\_us@nkfs.org](mailto:contact_us@nkfs.org) or call 1800-KIDNEYS (5436397)



# Kidney care goes digital

**NKF** has enhanced its quality of patient care by embarking on a digitalisation journey with the implementation of our Renal Point-Of-Care-System. Key processes are now automated and patients' records are digitised. This relieves the nurses of their manual work as much as possible and provides a centralised electronic medical record system for access by the doctors wherever they are, 24 hours a day.

Our patients receive a free smart card, which digitally records their pre-and post-treatment weight and other data like blood pressure while they are hooked up to the dialysis machines. In the past, nurses manually recorded patients' blood pressure every 30 minutes or one hour, which tends to disrupt their rest. Now, the dialysis machine reads the treatment plan for the patient once the smart card is inserted.

NKF's digitisation transformation means that nurses have more time to build relationships, rapport and trust with patients. They have more time to talk to patients, clarify any doubts or questions patients may have, and even spot early distress signs in patients and refer them to medical social workers or counsellors for timely intervention. Overall, patient safety and patient care will improve, resulting in better clinical outcomes for them.





Read our  
peritoneal dialysis  
patients' stories

[qrco.de/nkfpd](http://qrco.de/nkfpd)



# Holding on to independence

**M**r Lee Keng Huat, 55, was told by doctors that his kidneys had failed four years ago. He was devastated as he felt fine despite having been diagnosed with diabetes almost 20 years ago, and hypertension even before that. The news came as an utter shock. The worst part was having to make important decisions regarding his treatment when he was still struggling to come to terms with the dialysis.

Mr Lee is single and lives with his elderly mother who is 89. He has been passionate about audio equipment since he was a teenager and has been a sound engineer for many years at a retail store. He is used to his independence and was worried that his illness would rob him of it. It was important to him to continue working. So when a doctor presented him with the option of haemodialysis where he has to travel to a dialysis centre and home-based peritoneal dialysis (PD), it was a no brainer for him.

PD allows him to continue with his schedule of being at the store full-time, five and a half days every week. Nevertheless, the long hours of the retail industry can be punishing. He laments that he feels tired easily and cannot stand for too long as he is much weaker than before.

Although he remains positive and does not give in to despair, Mr Lee is aware of the harsh reality of his situation. The years of neglecting his health have taken a toll on his body and he is unsure of what the future holds. For now, he does his best to comply with his treatment and to work while he still can.

**A** number of my fellow kidney patients have passed on. Sometimes, I really regret getting myself into this situation. Not a day goes by without me wishing I had managed my diabetes better.

**Mr Lee Keng Huat**  
who wishes he had taken better care of his health

did you know?

## THIS TUBE IS PART OF A PATIENT'S BODY

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

Daily care required  
for catheter exit site

Permanent tube  
(catheter) inserted  
into abdomen

Having to cope with  
body image issues



# A kidney patient who is full of life

**M**adam Yip Fong Kuen, 73, is a boisterous lady who lights up the room with her smile and infectious laughter. However, she was a lot less lively a few months back when she was struggling to get around. As an avid cook, she found herself struggling to make the trip to wet market near her place. She felt frustrated being cooped up at home, yet she felt anxious whenever she was out alone. The lack of social

**I** enjoy my OT and exercise sessions! My walking is a lot steadier now and I am able to go about my daily activities more easily. I like staying active so this has been a great help to me!

**Madam Yip Fong Kuen**  
who is determined to age actively

interaction with others took a toll on her as she was a naturally extroverted person.

Fortunately, a nurse at the dialysis centre noticed her unsteady gait. She quickly referred Madam Yip to NKF's rehab team. Our multi-disciplinary care team came in to provide her with practical tips to improve her activities of daily living (ADL), as well as exercises that help strengthen her lower limbs. Madam Yip's outgoing personality shines at these sessions, as she readily takes to instructions and pushes herself through difficult tasks. Her positive attitude and ability to learn fast has resulted in her making excellent progress in her gait since she began the sessions.

These days, Madam Yip does not let her age slow her down. She is back to her chatty old self, and has even started to develop a liking for exercise! She attends exercise sessions at the nearby Residents' Committee (RC) almost daily and also volunteers as a secretary at the Women's Executive Committee.



Read our  
haemodialysis  
patients' stories  
[qrco.de/nkfhd](http://qrco.de/nkfhd)

did you know?

## NEEDLES ARE PART OF A PATIENT'S LIFE

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

312 needles  
inserted a year

Permanent  
lumps and scars  
on arm (fistula)

Fluid intake restricted  
to less than  
1000ml a day



**B**eing off dialysis is a huge relief. I am so grateful to my wife for her selfless decision to give me her kidney. Thank you to NKF also for supporting us through the Kidney Live Donor Fund!

**Mr Nicholas Nathan**  
who is looking forward to a life  
free of dialysis

## A ray of hope

**M**r Nicholas Nathan, 45, and Madam Kogelavani radiate the glow of newlyweds despite having been married for 19 years. Although Mr Nicholas is wheelchair-bound, he keeps up with his lively 11-year-old daughter. Upon meeting the loving family, one would hardly imagine the turmoil that they went through over the past decade.

Mr Nathan, who has been diabetic since he was 17, suffered a stroke when he was 36. This traumatic episode was swiftly followed by a series of health problems which eventually led to his kidneys failing in 2015. Due to complications, he had to have a permanent catheter inserted into his chest for haemodialysis.

Upon attending a talk about live kidney transplants, Madam Kogelavani immediately offered to donate her kidney to her husband. She says that the decision was not a hard one as she did not want her husband suffer the pain of dialysis. The entire process of preparing for the transplant took a year. The couple, together with the rest of their family members, were very positive and eager to undergo the procedure. Her sister also stepped in to



help care for their 9-year-old daughter during this period.

Mr Nathan is very relieved about not having to undergo dialysis anymore. He feels much more energetic and has much more time for his wife and daughter now. He returned to work six months after the surgery, and looks forward to leading a normal life. To his surprise, his doctor has even taken him off insulin as his insulin levels have improved greatly since the transplant.



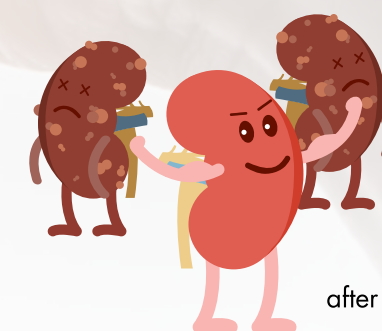
Read our inspiring  
kidney transplant stories  
[qrco.de/nkfkidtrans](http://qrco.de/nkfkidtrans)

## did you know?

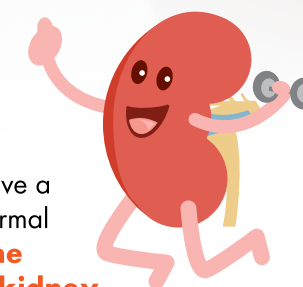
**A live kidney transplant is the best option of treatment for a kidney patient. Here are a few facts about kidney transplant that you might not have known!**



A compatible match may be found between two people who have **different blood groups**.



The diseased kidneys are not removed during a transplant. Hence, the recipient will have **3 kidneys** after the surgery.



A person can live a healthy and normal life with just **one functioning kidney**.



More information on  
kidney transplant  
[qrco.de/nkfkidtransin](http://qrco.de/nkfkidtransin)



# Sowing the seeds of love

Make a difference and  
volunteer with us today!

[qrco.de/nkfvolunteer](http://qrco.de/nkfvolunteer)



**M**r Nirmal Singh Dhillon, 60, has been a volunteer with NKF since 2007. He started out as an NKF Befriender, and the opportunity opened his eyes to the spectrum of support he can offer to others. These days, Nirmal, together with his wife and son, are active Grains of Hope volunteers who offer needy kidney patients their listening ears when they visit them to bring them food provisions and daily necessities.

Nirmal is not only a compassionate and dedicated volunteer, but also one who tirelessly advocates the spirit of volunteerism to those around him. As a Staff Officer of the Engagement Branch with the HQ Republic Singapore Navy, he actively encourages the full-time national servicemen (NSFs) to volunteer with NKF. Since 2016, nearly 150 youths have volunteered at NKF as befrienders in the dialysis centres.

Chalking up 52 volunteering hours in the past 12 months, Nirmal says, "Over my years of volunteering with NKF, I am repeatedly struck by how important it is to build a community of support for those in need so that they do not fall through the cracks. Thus, I work closely with my NSFs to encourage the young recruits to volunteer at NKF. I hope the younger generation would be inspired by their experience in NKF and would continue to do what they can for the vulnerable in the community."

**I** hope the younger generation would be inspired by their experience in NKF and would continue to do what they can for the vulnerable in the community.

**Mr Nirmal Singh Dhillon**  
who strongly believes in  
advocating volunteerism  
to youths  
(1<sup>st</sup> from left)



## Bringing music and love to our patients

**"T**he TENG Gives Back programme is The TENG Company's initiative to enliven those who are ill or in need of comfort with music. It seemed like a no brainer as we were a group of musicians, and I personally had been volunteering with NKF for quite some time.

The evergreen tunes such as Ai Pin Cai Hui Ying, Shanghai Tan and Bengawan Solo are crowd pleasers. They often evoke memories for some of the patients. We have had patients who will openly share these memories of their loved ones with us during the performance. Some have even teared up mid-performance.

It is an enriching experience both ways as both patients and volunteers enjoy the music and learn from each other. Some patients also share about their own music journeys. Some were from opera troupes, some play traditional instruments as well.



I would encourage others to give back as my own experience has been life-changing. Open your heart and be always ready to give. Personally, I feel the happiest when the NKF patients ask us when's the next time we are coming back to play music for them. "

**Ms Nancy Ong**

Head of Outreach, The TENG Company  
TENG Gives Back - Connecting Patients over their Love of Music



# NKF brings kidney health to the Malay Community

On 14 September 2019, An-Nur Mosque organised HIJRAH FEST 2019, a day of exercise, health and motivational talks, fun games and lucky draws at Woodlands Stadium. To enhance awareness of kidney health, we set up a booth at the event to provide insightful information on kidney disease risk prevention.

"Both my parents have chronic illnesses. I now realise how important it is for them to restrict their salt and sugar intake to better manage their conditions and prevent the development of chronic kidney diseases. Thank you An-Nur Mosque for including NKF at the Hijrah Fest!"

Miss Suriyaneer Jameel, who attended the Hijrah Fest.

Mr Zaqqy Mohamad, Minister of State for National Development & Manpower, attempts the Sit-to-Stand challenge.

**N**KF's goal of giving life and hope to kidney patients resonates well with our core values to help those in need. We are grateful to NKF for sharing their public education programme on kidney diseases with the 1,000 members of the Malay/Muslim community at the Hijrah Fest. Many of them gained insights on adopting a healthy lifestyle and paying more attention to their diet.

**Mr Khalid Shukur Bakri**

Executive Chairman of An-Nur Mosque on collaborating with NKF on outreach initiatives



## 7 day no sugary drink challenge

**NKF**'s 7-day No Sugary Drinks Challenge aims to encourage good dietary choices and imbue in our youth the values of compassion and empathy. Students pledged to not consume any sugary drinks for 7 days and were paired up with a classmate to be each other's accountability partner. Partners kept each other in check and reinforced the commitment to abstain from the sugary drinks. Students were given the option to donate their money saved from the drinks to help needy kidney patients. Over \$34,000 was raised through this initiative over a period of two months with the support from 10 educational institutions.

### tips to avoid sugary drinks

- 1 Have a glass of plain water when you feel the urge to quench your thirst with something. The water will fill you up and hopefully put you off getting another drink.
- 2 Some of us have developed the habit of having a sweet drink after a meal. Try having unsweetened fruit tea or sparkling water instead.

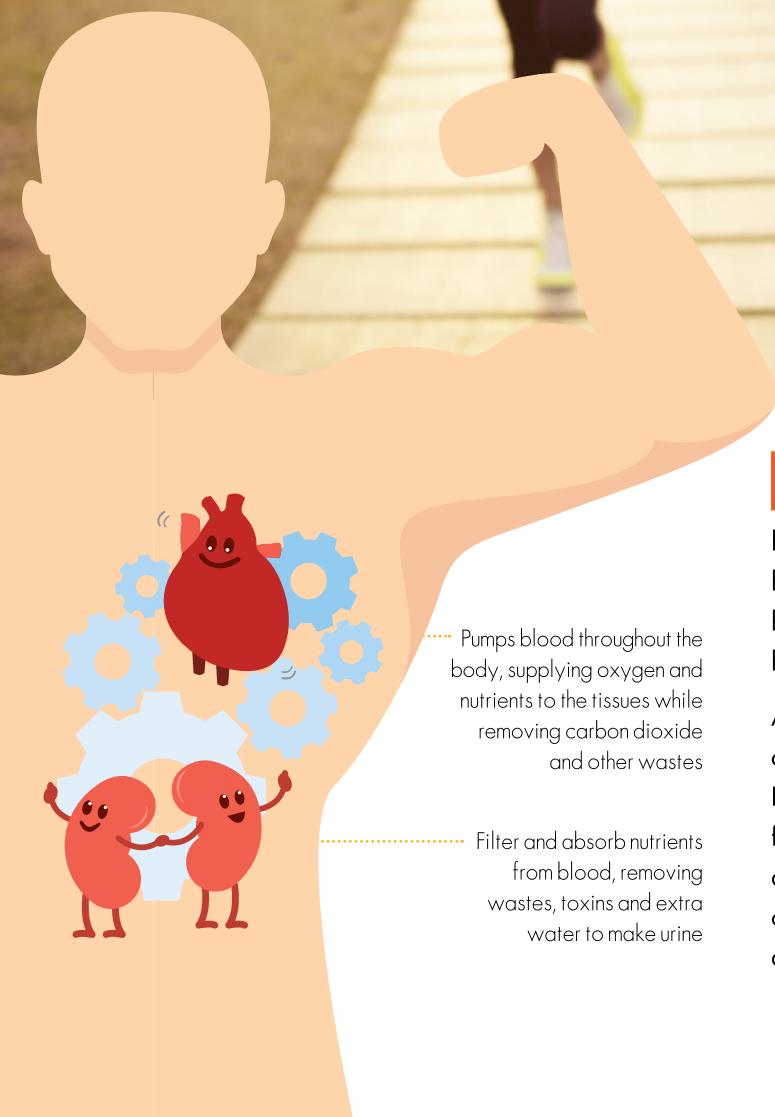
- 3 Get enough sleep! Sugary drinks provide us with a surge of energy that some people develop a reliance on. However they tend to suffer a crash later on. Get a good night's sleep in to avoid these sugar cravings.

**I** don't usually buy drinks and snacks. My little brother does, but he stopped when he heard about this challenge. He donated the money he saved to NKF!

**Rifa Adriana Binte Mustaffa**  
Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah



# Work your heart out



..... Pumps blood throughout the body, supplying oxygen and nutrients to the tissues while removing carbon dioxide and other wastes

..... Filter and absorb nutrients from blood, removing wastes, toxins and extra water to make urine

**D**id you know that your heart health affects your kidney health? As the heart pumps blood throughout the body, kidneys remove waste and toxins from it and help to regulate blood pressure. Keeping your heart healthy can also help to keep your kidneys in tip-top condition!

Aerobic exercise gets your heart pumping, which improves circulation and lowers blood pressure and heart rate. Engage in at least 2.5 hours of aerobic exercise every week for optimum heart health. Running, swimming and cycling are all great options! Taking the stairs instead of the lift is one simple way to squeeze some aerobic exercise into your day. No more excuses!

# Kick your sugar habit



**C**utting back on sugar is one of the best things you can do for your health! Excessive sugar intake increases our risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which is one of the leading causes of kidney failure. Here are a few tips on how you can reduce your sugar intake.

## Look out for the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS)

When shopping for groceries, we are often spoilt for choice by the variety of brands available. Go for those with the HCS symbol as they contain less sugar.



## Go for whole fruit instead of fruit juice

Fruit has naturally occurring sugars in it. As a glass of fruit juice tends to contain more than one piece of fruit, you could unknowingly be consuming a large amount of sugar! Get the full benefits of the fruit by eating it as it is, as juicing removes fibre from the fruit.

## Always choose water

Water contains zero sugar and zero calories. It's the best choice for your health! Add a slice of lemon to your water for a refreshing drink on a hot day.





# THE SEASON OF GIVING

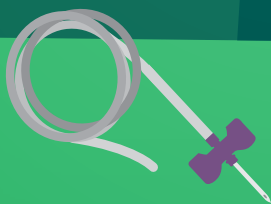
Christmas is the season of giving and sharing with others. Madam Koh Siew Hoon is one of our many kidney patients who have benefitted from generous donors like yourself. A single mother who struggled with visual impairment and kidney failure since her daughter was 12, Madam Koh is grateful for the financial help she has received which has allowed her to sustain her life on dialysis. She treasures every day she is given and dreams of being a grandmother soon.

As kidney failure is on the rise, there are many more kidney patients like Madam Koh who need your help. NKF hopes that they too, will be given life and hope this festive season. Your contribution goes a long way.



**\$100**

Provides a kidney patient with one-month supply of Artificial Kidneys (A.K.) to filter waste and excess fluids.



**\$500**

Provides a kidney patient with one-year supply of needles and bloodlines for their dialysis sessions.



**\$2,000**

To sponsor a dialysis chair, providing comfort for 6 kidney patients who spend more than 624 hours a year on the chair to sustain their lives.



**\$20,000**

To sponsor a dialysis machine and give Life and Hope to 6 kidney patients who are on dialysis thrice weekly and for 4 hours each session.

***Your contribution means a lot to our kidney patients!***