

Pregnancy Conversation Guide



Providence
Health Care

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Pregnancy and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Carrying a pregnancy is possible for many people living with any stage of chronic kidney disease (CKD), including those on dialysis or those who have had to have a kidney transplant. While kidney disease can sometimes make it harder to get pregnant and can carry different risks, many people with CKD may still want to have children and can have healthy pregnancies.

Risks During Pregnancy

Some health conditions can happen with any pregnancy, but those with CKD, on dialysis, or with a transplant might be at an increased risk for developing high blood pressure, worsening kidney function, or pre-eclampsia, a condition characterized by high blood pressure and signs of organ damage. It is important to discuss these risks with your care team before pregnancy so they can ensure your kidney health is stable and reduce the risk of complications.



People with CKD may face increased risks during pregnancy, including high blood pressure, worsening kidney function, and pre-eclampsia.

Risks for the Baby



If a pregnancy has complications, there are also potential risks for the baby. These might include growth restriction, low birth weight, premature birth, and the possible need for neonatal support such as a stay in the NICU. There are also special considerations regarding medications that you might be taking, as some medications can disrupt fetal development or cause birth defects in the baby. For example, mycophenolate mofetil (MMF), a medication commonly used after kidney transplantation, can cause serious birth defects and should be changed before conception under the guidance of your healthcare team.

When you are pregnant, you may need to switch to different medications to ensure the safe development of your baby.

Medications and Pregnancy

If you are currently on dialysis, pregnancy is also possible. However, your dialysis schedule may need to be increased throughout the pregnancy to ensure toxins are removed effectively from your body and to keep your baby safe. If you are currently doing peritoneal dialysis, you may want to switch to hemodialysis during pregnancy, as it decreases the risk of preterm birth and neonatal complications.

Pregnancy After a Kidney Transplant

If you have received a kidney transplant, you should wait at least one year before getting pregnant to ensure that the transplant is stable. This time also allows your immunosuppressive medications to be adjusted, lowering your risk of infections and making the pregnancy safer for both you and the baby.



Planning for a Healthy Pregnancy

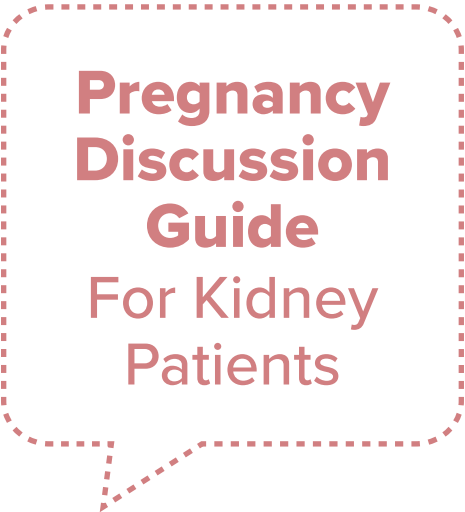
Planning ahead can help make pregnancy safer for you and your baby. Having open conversations with your kidney doctor and healthcare team can help you understand the risks, make a care plan, and get the support you need before, during, and after pregnancy. Decisions about pregnancy timing are best made together with your healthcare providers, who can help ensure you are in the safest possible position to conceive and carry a healthy pregnancy.



[Click here](#) for a printable discussion guide to help discuss with your kidney doctor if you are planning a pregnancy.

Questions You Might Want to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

Use this guide during conversations with your healthcare team.



Pregnancy Discussion Guide For Kidney Patients

+ Risks to the Pregnant Person

- How might pregnancy affect my kidney disease or kidney function?
- Could pregnancy speed up kidney damage or increase my chance of kidney failure?
- What are my risks for:
 - Worsening kidney function?
 - High blood pressure?
 - Preeclampsia or eclampsia?
 - Gestational diabetes?
 - Urinary tract infections?
- Are there any other risks to my own health that I should be aware of?
- Would having multiple pregnancies, or carrying twins/multiples, increase risks to my kidneys or overall health?
- Are there any ways to reduce the risk of pregnancy?

+ Risks to the Baby

- Does my CKD increase risks for my baby?
- What are the chances of fetal complications (e.g., fetal growth restriction, premature birth, low birth weight, neonatal support in the NICU, miscarriage, or stillbirth)?
- Could my baby inherit kidney disease or have other long-term health problems?

+ Medications and Treatments

- Can we review my medications one at a time so I can understand:
 - Are my current medications safe for the baby during pregnancy?
 - Which medications should I stop before trying to conceive, and are there safer alternatives I can switch to during pregnancy?
- Are there any vitamins or supplements I can take to prepare my body for pregnancy?
- Are there any new medications I might need to start when I am pregnant?

+ Dialysis and Pregnancy

- Will pregnancy change my dialysis type, schedule, or intensity?
- Will dialysis affect the baby's growth and development?

+ Kidney Transplant and Pregnancy

- How long should I wait after a kidney transplant before becoming pregnant?
- Is my transplant functioning well enough for pregnancy?
- Could pregnancy increase the risk of transplant rejection or damage?
- Will pregnancy affect the long-term survival of my transplant?

+ Healthcare Team and Monitoring

- Which healthcare providers should be involved in my pregnancy care?
- How often should I see my kidney doctor, obstetrician, maternal-fetal medicine specialist, transplant team, dialysis team, or primary health care provider?
- How often will I require monitoring, such as blood tests, urine tests, ultrasounds, or blood pressure checks?
- Who should I contact if I develop symptoms or complications?
- What red flag symptoms should I watch for during pregnancy?
- Which hospital is recommended for delivery?

+ Alternatives

- If pregnancy is not recommended for me at this time, is there a time in the future that might be better?
- Do you recommend any strategies for growing my family that do not require me to carry a pregnancy?



- [Kidneyfund.org/living-kidney-disease/chronic-kidney-disease-ckd-and-pregnancy#can-i-get-pregnant-if-i-have-ckd](https://www.kidneyfund.org/living-kidney-disease/chronic-kidney-disease-ckd-and-pregnancy#can-i-get-pregnant-if-i-have-ckd)
- [Kidneyfund.org/article/family-planning-and-kidney-disease-pregnancy](https://www.kidneyfund.org/article/family-planning-and-kidney-disease-pregnancy)
- [BCRenal.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Pregnancy_and_Family_Planning_in_ADPKD.pdf](https://www.bcrenal.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Pregnancy_and_Family_Planning_in_ADPKD.pdf)

Thank you to the renal obstetrics program at St. Paul's Hospital for their contributions to this handout.