

Kidney MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2025

VOLUME NO. 3.2 | Summer 2025

FRESH FLAVOURS

Incorporate these kidney-friendly, summer superfoods into your daily diet

REDISCOVER HIDDEN GEMS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Health benefits of adventuring and vacationing locally this summer

EATING LOCAL

Going beyond the label for your kidney health

DELAYING THE PROGRESSION OF CKD

Learn the importance of early detection, lifestyle changes, and medical management

YOUR KIDNEY HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

The hidden link and what you can do



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Kidney MAGAZINE

THE SUMMER ISSUE

Summer 2025 | Issue 3.2

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letter from the editor

Dear reader,

This summer, my family and I made a choice that felt both refreshingly simple and deeply restorative: we are taking our summer vacation close to home. Inspired by this month's feature article, "The Health Benefits of Adventuring and Eating Local," we've traded airport lines and jet lag for nearby hiking trails and beaches, local farmer's markets, and camping in Squamish.

When we featured precautions for travelling internationally with kidney disease in last summer's issue, the world was a different place. With ongoing global uncertainties and economic challenges, travel can suddenly become stressful, expensive, and unpredictable—factors that significantly affect both our wellbeing and finances. Exploring regions closer to home offers a safer, more manageable way to sightsee, relax, and stay connected to our health needs. British Columbia and the Yukon offer some of the most breathtaking scenery, and often we forget about the global destinations in our own backyards. Without the stress of long-distance travel or the pressure to "do it all," we are looking to truly unwind this summer, find space to breathe, and reconnect with our surroundings.

In this issue, we also explore the hidden link between kidney disease and mental health, discuss strategies for delaying the progression of CKD, and share some great kidney-friendly recipes and summer superfoods. We hope you find helpful information and interesting stories to connect with in these pages—whether you're living with kidney disease, caring for someone who is, or simply learning more about kidney health. We're honoured to be part of your journey.

Andrea Rudy
Managing Editor

A top-down photograph of a white ceramic plate filled with several berry popsicles. The popsicles are made of white yogurt with visible layers of red strawberries and blueberries. They are arranged on a light-colored wooden surface. Fresh strawberries and blueberries are scattered around the popsicles on the plate.

Berry Popsicles

1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries and thinly sliced strawberries
1 cup plain, regular non-fat yogurt*
2 tbsp honey or maple syrup (optional, adjust to taste)
½ tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp soy milk, 2% milk, or unsweetened almond milk (to thin mixture, if needed)

Blend yogurt, sweetener, vanilla, and liquid together until smooth.

Taste and adjust sweetness if needed.

Gently fold in berries.

Pour the mixture into popsicle molds.

Freeze for at least 4–6 hours or until solid.

Remove from molds and enjoy!

* Many non-dairy yogurts have additives, making them high in potassium or phosphate. Always consult with your healthcare provider when incorporating new foods into your diet.



Homemade yogurt berry popsicles can be a refreshing and kidney-friendly treat, especially when tailored to manage potassium, phosphorus, sodium, and protein intake.

Impress your guests with this gorgeous dessert at summer gatherings or have on hand for a midweek treat on those warm long days.

It's **Summer** Vacation!

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF ADVENTURING AND EATING LOCAL

Contributor: Kate Chong, Director of Programs

The summer provides a chance to break from routine, discover new places, and indulge in the enjoyments that travel brings.

While international travel offers enriching experiences that inspire personal growth and lifelong memories, we often overlook the value of local travel. Exploring regions close to home is a safer, less

expensive, and more manageable way to sightsee, unwind, and stay connected to health needs — especially when living with kidney disease. But it's not just more convenient — it's often more restorative. Vacationing locally involves less stress, fewer time zone changes, and more familiar environments, allowing us to relax, maintain healthy routines, and

truly unwind without the physical and mental strain of long-distance logistics.

So, when planning getaways this summer, don't forget to explore hidden gems in your own backyard or try venturing to nearby towns with charm, character, and unforgettable flavours.



Okanagan Valley

From Prince George to Vancouver, and Kelowna to Victoria, many regions have year-round markets, yet we often forget to visit these nearby gems. Take an afternoon to rediscover local crafts and taste some new artisan foods.



Fisherman's Wharf, Victoria

5 Benefits of Local Holidays

Less Travel Stress and Fatigue

Long flights, jet lag, and crossing time zones can disrupt sleep, hydration, medication timing, and meal schedules — all of which are crucial for kidney health. Local travel usually involves shorter transit times, reducing physical strain and helping maintain a steady routine.

Kidney health tip: When booking accommodation, prioritize places that support your kidney care routine. Look for accommodations with a kitchenette so you can prepare kidney-friendly meals instead of relying solely on restaurant food, and choose a place that supports quality sleep.

Movement and Mindfulness

Travel usually means walking — whether it's through quaint towns, nature trails, or open-air markets. Moderate physical activity is excellent for circulation, weight control, and overall wellness — all key for managing kidney disease.

Kidney health tip: Stay hydrated with water (check your fluid limits if prescribed) and use walking as a gentle way to support cardiovascular and kidney health.

Connection with Community and Nature

Exploring your region can lead to a renewed appreciation of your community and natural surroundings. For those with chronic disease, regular access to nature has been shown to reduce stress, lower inflammation, and boost mood. Local travel can include gentle hikes, botanical gardens, or scenic drives, which allow connection to nature without strenuous exertion. Cultural sites and local events foster a feeling of belonging and stimulate intellectual curiosity.

Kidney health tip: Take a short walk in a green space or visit a local garden weekly. If mobility is a concern, even sitting outdoors and engaging in calm conversation or birdwatching can provide restorative effects.

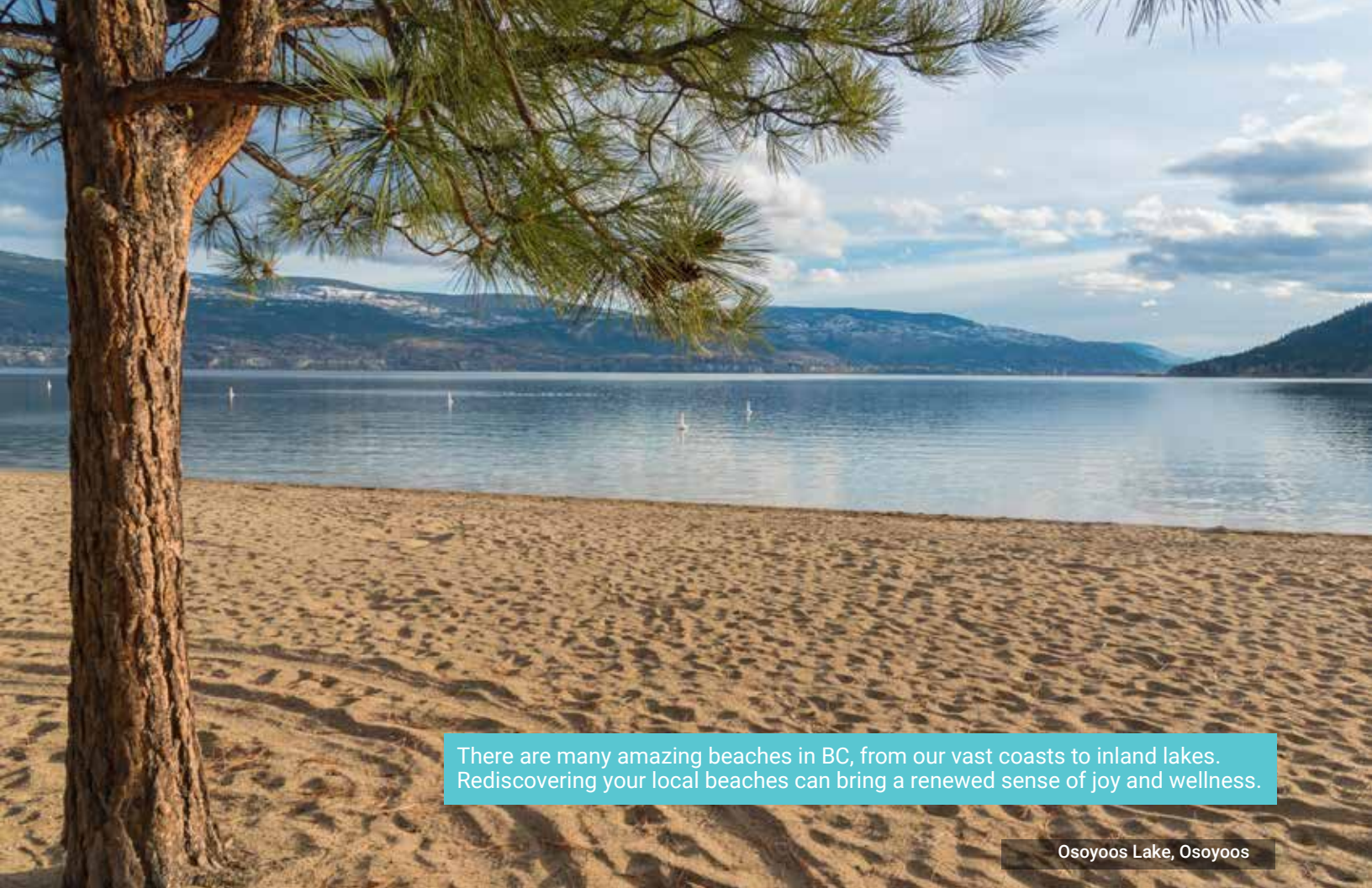
Rediscovering Hidden Gems with Purpose

There's something deeply satisfying about finding beauty close to home. Instead of hopping on a plane, explore nearby historic districts, nature reserves, or coastal drives. Use food as your map — plan stops at places known for fresh harvests or traditional recipes. It makes the journey more

Float plane tours aren't just for tourists. Many regions in BC and the Yukon offer excursions. Take flight and see the local beauty from a new angle.



Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound



There are many amazing beaches in BC, from our vast coasts to inland lakes. Rediscovering your local beaches can bring a renewed sense of joy and wellness.

Osoyoos Lake, Osoyoos

immersive and grounded. For someone living with kidney disease, this approach transforms summer travel from a source of stress into one of empowerment. You're not just escaping — you're engaging with your health in a proactive, pleasurable way. Approach your area like a first-time visitor. Ask yourself, what haven't I visited in years (or ever) and what would I recommend to someone new here? Try walking, biking, or driving a route you don't usually take. Changing your perspective often leads to new finds: a tucked-away park, a quiet shoreline, or a cozy café.

Kidney health tip: Keep a “kidney-friendly travel journal” where you jot down your favourite local discoveries and meals—it turns each trip into a celebration of both your surroundings and your self-care journey.

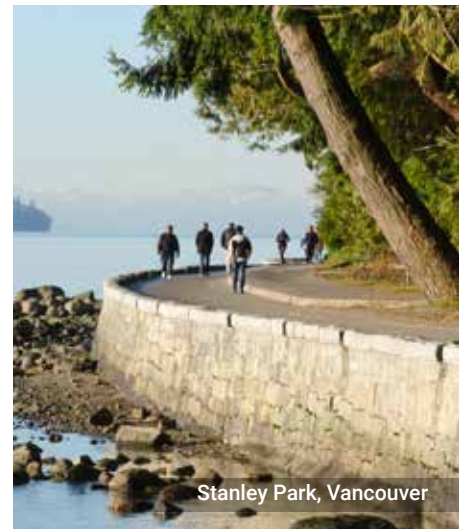
Wellness-Focused Experiences and Accommodations

Looking for a special experience? Whether you're visiting Whistler,

Tofino, the Okanagan, or elsewhere, BC has numerous options for accommodations or day spas that focus on comfort and wellness, for a special summer treat. Many lodges and B&Bs cater to dietary and mobility needs, while local spas, yoga retreats, and wellness centres encourage relaxation and self-care. The relatively short driving distances between regions allow for flexible, low-stress travel.

Kidney health tip: Let staff know in advance about your dietary or medical needs—they're often happy to adapt your experience for comfort and health.

Traveling and eating locally during summer holidays isn't just fun — it's a form of self-care. It encourages balance, connection, and discovery. For those managing kidney disease, it can mean safer meals, more enjoyable experiences, and a renewed sense of freedom.



Stanley Park, Vancouver

Why 30 Minutes of Nature Matters

Just 20–30 minutes in nature has been shown to lower cortisol levels and blood pressure. Time outdoors can improve focus and reduce mental fatigue. Living in British Columbia and the Yukon provides locals with amazing access to nature, right at the front door.



The Joy of Local Cuisine

There's a special kind of thrill in uncovering a local café that serves homemade berry pie using fruit picked that morning, or stumbling upon a quiet hiking trail that ends in a panoramic view. Traveling locally lets you slow down and appreciate the small things — the rhythm of a farmers market, the story behind a regional recipe, the warm welcome from a mom-and-pop diner.

Food becomes more than sustenance — it's part of the adventure. Eating locally while traveling not only supports small businesses but often gives you access to fresher, less processed meals. Local fare tends to be made with whole ingredients and minimal additives, and when you're dealing with kidney disease, that can be a game-changer.



Fresher, Seasonal Ingredients

Local eateries and markets often focus on seasonal produce. Seasonal fruits and vegetables are usually picked at peak ripeness, which means better taste and higher nutritional value — and they're often lower in preservatives and sodium than out-of-season imports.

Kidney Tip: Many summer fruits—like apples, blueberries, grapes, and peaches—are kidney-friendly when enjoyed in moderation. Eating what's in season makes it easier to manage

potassium levels without sacrificing flavour.



Smaller Portion Sizes and Shareable Plates

Local spots often offer more reasonable portion sizes than chain restaurants, or they allow easy sharing of meals.

Kidney Tip: Share a main dish or ask for a to-go box when the meal arrives to control protein, sodium, and phosphorus intake.



Supports Community and Reduces Stress

Dining at local eateries contributes to the local economy and creates a more relaxed, personal experience — which can be good for mental and emotional well-being.

Kidney Tip: Enjoy the outing as part of your self-care, but balance it by planning a lighter, kidney-friendly meal at home for your next dish.



Less Processed Food

Hidden gems — from roadside produce stands to farm-to-table bistros — often rely less on processed or frozen foods and more on scratch-made meals. This helps reduce your intake of sodium and phosphate additives, both of which are problematic for kidney health.

Kidney Tip: Always opt for grilled, steamed, or baked options when possible. Avoiding sauces or choosing oil-and-herb dressings can cut sodium without dulling taste.



Tips for Purchasing Produce at Roadside Stands

- Look for vibrant colours and firm (but not hard) textures.
- Avoid produce with wrinkles, mold, bruises, or soft spots.
- Check for consistent ripeness — e.g., an evenly coloured tomato or peach.
- Many fruits should have a sweet, fragrant smell when ripe.
- No smell often means under-ripe; sour or fermented smell means overripe.
- Heavier-for-their-size items usually mean juicier and riper.
- Early in the day, produce is fresher and better stocked.
- At the end of the day, some vendors offer discounts to move remaining stock.



Fresh fish is a high-quality source of protein that's easier on the kidneys than processed meats, and contains omega-3 fatty acids that help reduce inflammation and support cardiovascular health — a key concern for people with kidney disease. Many wharfs have opportunities for the public to buy seafood directly from fishermen.

Did you know?

There are more than 145 farmers markets in British Columbia.



Farmers markets are an immersive experience, often feeling festive, with local musicians, cooking demos, and families enjoying the day. In fact, visiting farmers markets is a simple yet powerful way to support both mental and kidney health. These vibrant community spaces offer access to fresh, seasonal produce — often lower in sodium, phosphorus, and preservatives — making it easier for people with kidney disease to manage their diets with wholesome, unprocessed ingredients. Fruits like apples, berries, and grapes, along

with vegetables like bell peppers and cabbage, are commonly available and kidney-friendly when eaten in moderation. Beyond nutrition, farmers markets also provide mental health benefits: the social interaction, outdoor setting, and slower pace can reduce stress and promote a sense of connection. Engaging directly with local growers fosters mindfulness and a deeper appreciation for what we eat, which is especially meaningful for those managing chronic conditions. Also, you can feel good about supporting small farms and local makers directly.

Here are some tips for finding local summer activities, whether you're looking for something active, social, relaxing, or budget friendly.

Check Community Calendars

Libraries, parks and recreation departments, and local newspapers usually list free or low-cost events like outdoor movie nights, concerts, and festivals.

Use Local Apps and Platforms

Eventbrite, Meetup, and Facebook Events are great for discovering local happenings by interest or location. Near a sporting venue? Check out their website for upcoming events.

Explore Parks and Trails

Many parks host hidden gems: yoga classes, nature walks, birdwatching events, or outdoor movies.

Stop by the Visitor Centre

They're not just for tourists! Visitor centres have brochures and staff to point you toward upcoming events. Local coffee shops or community bulletin boards can also be full of flyers and posters.

Try a New Hobby Group

Summer's a great time to dip into outdoor yoga, photography classes, or community gardening. Visit kidneywellnesshub.ca for information on online gardening and preserving classes or to learn about community meetup walking groups.



fresh summer **SUPERFOODS**

for a kidney-friendly diet



Berries

Why it's good

Low in potassium and rich in antioxidants. Try strawberries, blueberries, raspberries.

How to enjoy

Add to salads, yogurt, or freeze for a refreshing snack.



Roasted Cauliflower

Why it's good

High in vitamin C and fibre, low in potassium and phosphorus.

How to enjoy

Roasted, mashed as a potato alternative, or as a vegetable salad base.



Bell Peppers

Why it's good

Full of flavour and vitamin C with low potassium content.

How to enjoy

Raw with hummus (kidney-friendly version), grilled on skewers, or stuffed with rice and herbs.



Zucchini

Why it's good

Very versatile and low in potassium.

How to enjoy

Grilled, spiralized into "zoodles," or added to veggie skewers.



Grapes

Why it's good

Packed with antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory properties. Low in potassium.

How to enjoy

Fresh snack or frozen grapes for a cool treat.



Grilled Pineapple

Why it's good

A tropical treat that's low in potassium (unlike bananas or oranges).

How to enjoy

Fresh chunks, grilled with a sprinkle of cinnamon, or blended into smoothies.

Ways with WATER

Craving a sugary drink like juice or pop? Reach for infused water instead—packed with all of the flavour but none of the calories.

On limited fluid intake? Here are some quick tips to quench the thirst.

Suck on ice chips or frozen fruit cubes, like frozen grapes or berries. Limit salty foods that make you thirsty, and try cold fruits and vegetables high in water content but low in potassium.



How to Make Flavoured Water

Cold water (still or sparkling)

Fresh herbs (mint, basil, or rosemary)

Fresh fruits (e.g., lemon, lime, berries, orange, cucumber, apple)

Ice cubes (optional)

Wash fruit and herbs thoroughly. Slice fruits thinly to release more flavour and lightly crush herbs with your hands to release their oils. Place 1–2 cups of fruit and a few sprigs of herbs into the pitcher. You can mix and match combinations (e.g., lemon + mint, cucumber + lime, strawberry + basil). Pour cold still or sparkling water into the pitcher until full and stir gently to mix. Let the water sit in the refrigerator for at least 1–2 hours to allow the flavours to develop. For stronger flavour, infuse overnight. Pour into glasses over ice and garnish with extra fruit slices or herbs if desired.

TIPS

Use a reusable water bottle to take it on the go.

Drink within 2 days for the best taste and freshness.

Experiment with new combinations like pineapple + mint or orange + blueberry!

Visit kidneycommunitykitchen.ca for more kidney-friendly beverages.

SUMMER SIDES

Refreshing Flavours

Contributor: Dani Renouf, RD, MSc

Summer brings sunshine, warmth, and with it an abundance of fresh, vibrant foods. Seasonal produce like cucumbers, berries, bell peppers, and cabbage are naturally lower in sodium, potassium, and phosphorus—making them ideal for kidney-friendly meals. Hydrating, high in antioxidants, and rich in fibre, they support heart and digestive health. Fresh herbs, citrus juices, and olive oil add flavour without relying on salt or processed ingredients. Embracing fresh, colourful summer foods helps us enjoy variety and nourishment while supporting better overall wellbeing.

Tropical Cabbage Coleslaw

Great for: Picnics, on top of lean proteins, in wraps or burgers

2 cups red cabbage, finely shredded
½ cup green cabbage, finely shredded
½ cup fresh pineapple, finely chopped

¼ cup red bell pepper, finely diced
2 tbsp red onion, finely diced (optional)
1 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)

Citrus Vinaigrette

2 tbsp fresh lime juice
1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
1½ tbsp olive oil
1 tsp honey or maple syrup (optional, for sweetness)
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Pinch of salt (optional, or omit for strict sodium restriction)

In a large bowl combine red cabbage, green cabbage, pineapple, bell pepper, red onion, and cilantro.

In a small bowl or jar, whisk together lime juice, vinegar, olive oil, honey, and black pepper. Pour dressing over the slaw and toss well to combine.

Let sit for 10–15 minutes to allow flavors to blend. Serve chilled. Makes 4 servings.



Black Bean and Corn Salad

Great for: Light meals, BBQ side dish, or potluck

Dressing

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ¼ cup fresh lime juice | ½ tsp ground cumin |
| 3 tbsp avocado oil | Several grinds of black pepper |
| 1 small garlic clove, finely grated | ⅛ tsp sea salt (if allowed by your care team) |

In a small bowl, whisk together lime juice, avocado oil, garlic, cumin, salt, and black pepper. Taste and adjust seasoning — the garlic and lime may provide enough flavour without salt.

Salad

- ½ cup low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed very well
- ½ cup fresh or frozen corn kernels, thawed
- ½ cup red bell pepper, finely diced
- 2 tbsp red onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

In a mixing bowl, combine the rinsed black beans, corn, red bell pepper, onion, and cilantro. In a small bowl or cup, whisk together lime juice, olive oil, cumin, and pepper. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently to combine. Chill in the refrigerator for 20 minutes before serving for best flavour. Makes 4 servings.

Cucumber Lemon-Dill Salad

Great for: A quick side dish or cooling snack

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1½ cups thinly sliced cucumber | 1 tbsp olive oil |
| 1 tbsp red onion, thinly sliced | ½ tsp honey |
| 1 tbsp fresh dill, chopped | Fresh ground black pepper, to taste |
| 1½ tbsp fresh lemon juice | Pinch of salt (Omit for strict sodium limits) |

In a bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, honey, dill, and pepper. Add sliced cucumber and red onion. Toss to coat well. Let chill in the refrigerator for 15–20 minutes. Makes 2-3 servings.



DELAYING the PROGRESSION of Chronic Kidney Disease

Contributors: Deborah Tucker and Dr. Micheli Bevilacqua, MD, FRCPC, MHA, CHE



Susan cooking up a kidney-friendly meal

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a long-term condition in which the kidneys gradually lose function. While there is no cure, progression can be slowed significantly through early detection, lifestyle changes, and medical management.

CKD affects an estimated 850 million people worldwide, yet often goes unnoticed until the later stages. However, the journey of CKD does not have to be an inevitable decline toward kidney failure. Today, with advances in understanding the disease and managing its risk factors, it is possible to delay CKD progression and preserve kidney function. Taking proactive steps can help patients maintain kidney function, improve quality of life, and delay the need for dialysis or transplantation.

Susan, who lives with kidney disease, recently shared how she changed lifestyle habits and activities to maintain her health and normalize her life as much as possible.

When Susan was first diagnosed with kidney disease it was a complete shock. "I had suffered with high blood pressure for 20 years but when I moved to BC from Ontario seven years ago, my blood pressure went through the roof."

Knowing something was not quite right, she made an appointment at

a local medical clinic and, after a series of tests, was told she had stage four kidney disease. "I could not believe it. I knew very little about the disease and that high blood pressure is a key risk factor." Susan is not alone on that front.

A recent Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of The Kidney Foundation of Canada shows there is a significant gap in Canadians' knowledge when it comes to kidneys, with 55% of people indicating they know nothing about kidney disease, and 52% lacking awareness of the risks.

"After the shock of my diagnosis, I felt alone. It was then I discovered the Kidney Foundation and reached out to the BC & Yukon Branch to learn about the various programs and services, in addition to educational and volunteer opportunities."

Susan joined one of the volunteer chapters where she found others living with kidney disease in her community. "It was hugely therapeutic to speak to others going through similar experiences. I also attended some great educational sessions."

Peer support can play a vital role in encouraging adherence to lifestyle changes. It provides patients with emotional encouragement, practical advice, and a sense of community. Engaging with others who share similar experiences helps individuals manage the psychological stress that often accompanies chronic illness, which in turn can improve quality of life.

As time went by, Susan wanted to do more and knew that volunteering could be an invaluable way to not only give back but also share her experience with others, so she decided to become a peer mentor.

The Kidney Foundation offers programs that provide peer mentorship support, guidance, and companionship to those grappling with the realities of kidney disease. Mentors are supported with a comprehensive training program that can also offer the chance to reflect and understand more about themselves. "I was matched with three lovely individuals, each with their own story. While I found it very rewarding to share my journey, it was also beneficial for me as I learned from the mentees. It's a wonderful program."

Today, Susan continues to work with

her nephrologist and kidney care team to maintain her kidney function and do what she can to avoid dialysis. "My nephrologist wants me to adopt healthier lifestyle habits by walking and exercising more, as this is so important. I'm not much of a walker—never have been—but I was really pleased when I learned about the Kidney Wellness Hub."

Research shows that movement and healthy lifestyle habits are important for kidney health. In the early stages of kidney disease, it may even help slow the progression, delaying or eliminating the need for dialysis or a transplant.

To help support healthy lifestyle habits and overall wellbeing, the Kidney Wellness Hub offers online tools, videos, and classes for staying active, eating well, mental wellbeing and socially connecting.

Susan participates in chair yoga for those with low mobility and Exercise Snacks—an initiative led by kinesiology students that involves a bite-size approach to exercise to build strength and mobility. Patients are offered individual check-ins to help them reach their goals.

An avid cook, she was also concerned with how kidney disease would impact what she could eat. But the Foundation's kidney-friendly recipes and cooking classes led by renal dietitians put her at ease.

"I just want to normalize my life as much as possible and I am very grateful for the Kidney Foundation and how it supports me and so many others in the kidney community to do just that," Susan adds.

Ultimately, delaying the progression of CKD requires a collaborative effort—patients, families, and healthcare teams working together

Researchers are increasingly exploring how factors beyond traditional medical treatment—such as gut health, stress management, and sleep quality—play a significant role in preserving kidney function. The gut microbiome, for instance, influences inflammation and toxin levels in the body; imbalances in gut bacteria may contribute to the buildup of uremic toxins, which can worsen CKD. Promoting a healthier gut through fibre-rich, kidney-friendly foods and possibly probiotics is showing promise as a supportive therapy. Meanwhile, chronic stress has been linked to high blood pressure and systemic inflammation, both of which accelerate kidney damage.

with a shared goal: to preserve kidney health and enhance quality of life. While CKD remains a challenging diagnosis, it is no longer an unalterable path. Progression can often be slowed or even halted through informed, consistent action. Whether through lifestyle changes, medical treatment, or nutritional planning, early and ongoing efforts can make a significant difference. Empowerment, education, and regular care are the best tools against kidney disease.

The Kidney Foundation has a number of resources on managing kidney health, including a handbook with information about the stages of chronic kidney disease and steps that can help you protect your remaining kidney function. Visit kidney.ca. The kidneywellnesshub.ca is a good source for on-demand cooking, exercise, and relaxation classes for kidney health.

Did you know? Sleep is emerging as a vital piece of the puzzle—poor sleep patterns are associated with higher blood pressure, impaired glucose control, and faster decline in kidney function.

10 Strategies to Delay CKD Progression

Control Blood Pressure

- High blood pressure is both a cause and consequence of CKD; ask your kidney team what your specific blood pressure target is and ensure you are meeting it.
- Home blood pressure monitoring can be a good way to check you are meeting targets.



Manage Blood Sugar

- People with diabetes should confirm their target level with their care team, monitor levels, and ensure targets are met.
- Ensure regular lab tests are performed for diabetic kidney disease.



Follow a Kidney-Friendly Diet

- Limit sodium and avoid high protein intake. In later CKD stages, excess protein may burden kidneys.
- Consider a 'plant forward' diet. Integrate more plant-based protein over animal-based protein.
- Reduce or avoid highly processed foods.
- Monitor potassium and phosphorus levels as needed.
- Work with a renal dietitian for personalized advice.



Stay Physically Active

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity most days.
- Exercise improves cardiovascular health, which supports kidney function.



Avoid Nephrotoxic Substances

- Limit NSAIDs (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen).
- Avoid contrast dyes unless necessary.
- Inform all healthcare providers about CKD.





Medical Adherence

- Take all medications as prescribed (do not stop or adjust doses without consulting your doctor).
- Some medications specifically reduce CKD progression. Discuss with your team which medications these are.



Quit Smoking

- Smoking reduces blood flow to the kidneys and accelerates disease progression.
- If you smoke, working towards reducing is a good achievement too—every little bit helps.



Maintain a Healthy Weight

- Obesity increases the risk of CKD and speeds its progression.
- Weight loss can reduce kidney stress and improve blood pressure.



Stay Hydrated (But Not Overhydrated)

- Drink fluids based on your doctor's advice.
- In early CKD, normal fluid intake is often fine.
- In later stages, fluid restrictions may apply.



Regular Checkups with Nephrologist

- Early detection of changes allows for timely intervention.
- Monitor for complications (anemia, bone disease, electrolyte imbalance).
- Frequent check-ups help to track kidney function (eGFR) and urine ACR.



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The Space Between Health and Hope

A Mother and Daughter Speak Out on Kidney Disease

Contributor: Chloe Ritchie

In 1998, at just one week old, Sarah Palmer was diagnosed with kidney failure. This marked the beginning of a long journey with bilateral renal dysplasia—a rare condition in which both kidneys develop abnormally during fetal development. Through all the ups and downs, health scares, and moments of hope, Sarah has had the unwavering support of her closely knit family to lean on.



Sarah with her mother, Patricia, and brother, Nicholas

Kidney Magazine and Kidney PLUGGED IN recently caught up with the 26-year-old and her mother, Patricia, at Olympic Village Square—the site of the 2025 Vancouver Kidney Walk—to hear her story.

KM: Sarah and Patricia, thank you so much for speaking with us and sharing your journey. When did it all begin?

Patricia: Sarah was born two months premature because of difficulties with my pregnancy. We were told that she was fine, and everything seemed okay for about a week. But at seven days old, they did some routine blood work and discovered that she had kidney failure. So that's when Sarah's kidney journey started—at a very young age and long before she can remember.

As she was growing up, we continued to go to BC Children's Hospital every couple of months, typically. She was a very picky eater and was never hungry, and so they supplemented her diet with extra calories. She took medications to help with her kidney failure, and eventually was on several medications, including one injection, which I imagine she remembers.

But at age seven, they told us that she really needed a transplant. She was falling off the growth curves, and so when she was seven years old, I donated a kidney to Sarah. I went into Vancouver General Hospital and she went into BC Children's Hospital. I went in at six o'clock on a Monday morning, and by three in the afternoon, Sarah had my kidney.

KM: Do you remember a big change after you received the kidney transplant, Sarah?

Sarah: After getting my transplanted kidney, I felt much more energetic and much hungrier. Which was great. So, life seemed pretty normal. I went to school, but had different restrictions,



Sarah with Nicholas and her father, Michael

such as wearing a mask. I had to use a different washroom from everybody because of all the germs. I also stopped going on the monkey bars, because they could hurt my transplanted kidney.

Patricia: Yes, that's right. When she went into the hospital to have her transplant, she had calluses all over her hands. The doctors asked her what she had been doing, and she said, "monkey bars." And, of course, they told her that there were no more monkey bars after the transplant.

KM: You did really well with your transplanted kidney for about 10 years, but then your health took a turn. Can you share more about that part your story.

Sarah: In 2015—I was 17 then—I got diagnosed with chronic rejection. It's a slow or gradual rejection, and I didn't feel many symptoms.

Patricia: One of the things that was really noticeable was her decline in energy. She really lost a lot of weight; she went from a size 8 to a size 2. She just wasn't eating very much at all, and she wasn't feeling well.

By this point Sarah had transitioned from BC Children's Hospital to the adult world at St. Paul's Hospital and her health team said we needed to start dialysis. So, Sarah started on peritoneal dialysis (PD)*.

Sarah: I also found out I had PTLD*, which is post-transplant lymphoma disorder.

Patricia: The doctors needed to ease off on the transplant medications so that she could fight this other problem. They said once we backed off on the anti-rejection medications, Sarah's kidney would continue to fail at a more rapid pace, and so we'd need to get her onto dialysis at that point. And we chose to do peritoneal dialysis.

*Peritoneal dialysis removes waste products and excess water from your body by using the peritoneal cavity on the inside of your abdomen to clean your blood.

*Post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder is a rare complication that can occur after organ transplantation, where white blood cells multiply uncontrollably.

KM: What changed for you when you started peritoneal dialysis?

Sarah: I felt much better. I gained energy and so I was less fatigued, and my appetite increased.

While I experienced lots of positive changes on PD, one of the biggest changes for me was swimming, which I used to do three times a week. But with the catheter, I wasn't allowed to swim anymore because of the infection rate. So, that was a bit disappointing.

It also can be more complicated to travel when you're on dialysis, even PD, where the machine is relatively small. It takes more planning, but it is possible.

KM: You eventually switched from PD to home hemodialysis. Why was that?

Sarah: As time went by, PD did

not work so well and symptoms like fatigue returned. Unfortunately, my peritoneum*, got thicker so I switched to home hemodialysis+. I'm feeling much better now. I have a lot

more energy on this dialysis, and I'm a lot less swollen. Plus, I can swim again which makes me so happy.

Because of kidney failure, I'm itchy. I



Sarah with her brothers, Nicholas and Matthew, and a family friend



Nicholas and Matthew by her side, BC Children's Hospital

think a lot of the different therapies are helping, so it's slowly getting better, but it is annoying. And I'm on the kidney transplant wait list for a deceased donor.

Patricia: She's highly sensitized, which means that she doesn't match a very large percentage of the population, less than one percent.

We kind of knew at the outset it was going to be a long wait, but we're really keen to try and find a living donor. That will provide better outcomes, and it opens up more opportunities, too.

KM: Sarah, you've been keeping busy with studies and certain activities.

Sarah: Yes, I walk 12,000 steps a day to keep healthy. I love to cook and completed a baking and pastry arts program at Vancouver Community College while on PD. Now I am taking a psychology course there, too.

KM: You've mentioned how close you are with your brothers.

Sarah: Yes! I'm so grateful to my brothers, Nicholas and Matthew, who have continuously been there for me.

My family has a cabin on the Sunshine Coast, which we visit lots in the summer. My brothers and I enjoy swimming, kayaking, and just spending time together.

KM: You've also been involved with the Kidney Foundation through its Peer Support and Engagement program.

Sarah: Yes, I've joined some online support groups and connected with someone one-on-one over the phone through the peer support program.

KM: And how has that helped you?



Kidney Kids Camp, 2023

Kidney Kids Camp

KM: We heard that you were one of the first Kidney Kid campers.

Sarah: Yes, I have always loved summer camp. When I was eight, I started going to the Kidney Foundation's Kidney Kids Camp, which allowed me to attend overnight camp when I needed treatment. I think I went to the camps for about a decade.

KM: That's incredible. What are some of your favourite memories?

Sarah: I started at Camp Zajac, which had horses and a lake we swam in, plus archery and other activities. Later, I went to Camp Latona by the ocean, so we did more water-based activities like kayaking, swimming, tubing, and even high and low ropes courses.

KM: Did you prefer the inland activities or the ocean ones?

Sarah: Definitely the ocean ones. I've always loved swimming and tubing. And once I was in the older group, we even got to go water skiing, which was so much fun.

KM: Do you still stay in touch with

some of the people you met?

Sarah: Oh, for sure. I've stayed in contact with quite a few people, mostly through social media.

KM: That's so special—to have those lifelong friendships and memories. It must have been such a great escape, just being a kid without having to think about kidney disease.

Sarah: Exactly.

Since 2005, the BC & Yukon Branch, along with the Children's Organ Transplant Society, has offered youth aged 8-18 who are affected by kidney disease or have received an organ transplant, the chance to experience a summer adventure with their peers. Held at Camp Latona, Kidney Kids Camp provides outdoor fun while attending to the children's individual safety and medical wellbeing.

Waterskiing, crafts, paddling, ropes course, swimming, archery, and great food are all part of the adventure for children with special medical needs. New friendships are forged, and great fun is had by all. For more information, visit kidney.ca.

*The peritoneum is a thin membrane lining the abdominal cavity. In peritoneal dialysis, this membrane acts as a filter to help remove waste and excess fluid from the blood. Over time, repeated exposure to dialysis fluid can cause the peritoneum to thicken and scar, reducing dialysis effectiveness.

+ Home hemodialysis refers to the process of cleaning the blood through a machine at home instead of in a clinic or hospital.

Searching for a Living Donor



A kidney transplant is not a cure. It is, however, the best available treatment option for many people with kidney failure, yet the demand for donor organs is far greater than the supply. Finding a living kidney donor is a big step and can feel overwhelming, but there is a path and support to help begin the process.



The Kidney Foundation has a three-part webinar that walks through the process step-by-step, which you can find at kidneywellnesshub.ca/recorded-webinars.



When beginning your search for a living donor, try to think of it less as “asking” someone to give you a kidney, and more as sharing your story.



If you’re already sharing your story, then you’re doing donor outreach without realizing. When developing your story, you’ll want to keep some of these things in mind — be yourself, stay positive, be honest, and don’t try to reinvent the wheel.

Sarah: It’s been really helpful just knowing that I’m not alone—that there are others who’ve gone through similar things. It helps to feel understood and supported.

KM: Absolutely. That sense of community is so important. There’s also a young adults virtual group you can join anytime, too.

Sarah: Yeah, it’s great to have those options.

KM: You also participated in the Kidney Walk this year. Why is it important to you?

Sarah: The Kidney Walk is really important to me because not only does it raise funds, but it also spreads awareness about kidney

disease and how much it can impact your life. It was so great to have my whole family there to support me too.

KM: And we were excited to have you as one of our speakers at the Kidney Walk in Vancouver! Patricia and Sarah, thank you so much for sharing your story with us.



Sarah and her brothers, BC Children’s Hospital



Sarah speaking at the 2025 Vancouver Kidney Walk

The HIDDEN CONNECTION

Kidney and Mental Health

Contributor: Darpan Bathal, MSW, RSW



Your kidneys do more than just filter waste—they play a vital role in keeping your entire body balanced and healthy. But what many people don't realize is that kidney health is closely tied to mental health.

The connection between mental health and chronic kidney disease (CKD) is becoming increasingly clear, with growing evidence that emotional wellbeing plays a vital role in both the progression of the disease and the overall quality of life for those affected.

Recent research shows that individuals with CKD are much more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. At the same time, poor mental health can worsen kidney function. Understanding this connection can help patients, families, and healthcare providers take a more complete approach to wellbeing—one that supports both the mind and body.

High Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in CKD Patients

A comprehensive meta-analysis encompassing over 80,000 CKD patients across 27 countries revealed that approximately 26.5% experience clinical depression, with higher rates observed in those undergoing hemodialysis.

A study published in the *American Journal of Kidney Diseases* this year also found that patients with CKD are 56% more likely to suffer from serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, compared to the general population. Additionally, a prospective cohort study from the UK Biobank demonstrated that individuals with psychiatric disorders have a 52% increased risk of developing CKD,

highlighting the need for integrated mental health care for those living with kidney disease.

Effective Interventions

Addressing mental health in CKD patients is crucial for improving outcomes. Last year, a systematic review and meta-analysis of 19 randomized controlled trials published in *BMC Nephrology* found that psychosocial interventions, including psychotherapy, significantly reduce depressive symptoms in adults with CKD.

Meditation is a proven mind-body practice that can significantly benefit people with kidney disease, both emotionally and physically. While it does not reverse kidney damage, it helps manage the stress, anxiety,

blood pressure, pain, and depression that often accompany CKD and dialysis. Meditation can also improve treatment adherence by improving mental clarity and motivation. Furthermore, it can help reduce pre-session anxiety and help to recover and relax after dialysis.

Lifestyle modifications also play a pivotal role. A study analyzing data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) between 2007 and 2018 found a significant association between sedentary behaviour and increased depression in CKD patients, suggesting that promoting physical activity could mitigate depressive symptoms. The evidence underscores the necessity of incorporating mental health assessments and interventions into routine CKD care. Regular screening for depression and anxiety, coupled with appropriate psychosocial support, can not only



improve mental wellbeing but also potentially slow CKD progression.

For individuals living with CKD, addressing mental health is not just beneficial—it's essential for

comprehensive care and improved outcomes. As awareness grows and more healthcare systems adopt a holistic approach, individuals living with CKD can look forward to better support and improved quality of life.

What Can Patients Do to Support Their Kidney and Mental Health?

If you're living with chronic kidney disease, taking steps to care for your mental health can make a big difference in your overall wellbeing. Here are a few ways to support both your body and mind.

1. Talk to Your Doctor

Don't hesitate to bring up how you're feeling emotionally. Depression and anxiety are common in CKD, and your care team can help with screening and referrals.

2. Stay Active

Even light exercise like walking or stretching can boost your mood and support kidney health. Talk with your doctor about what's safe for you.

3. Connect with Others

Support groups—whether in person or online—can reduce feelings of isolation and help you cope with the emotional aspects of CKD.

4. Try Mindfulness or Relaxation Techniques

Practices like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga have been shown to reduce stress and improve quality of life for people with chronic illnesses.

The Kidney Wellness Hub offers a number of online and recorded, on-demand classes to help those living with kidney disease improve their physical activity and practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques. The Kidney Foundation of Canada offers regular peer engagement and support groups as way to connect with those going through the same experiences. Visit kidneywellnesshub.ca and kidney.ca for more information.

Mental Health Techniques

Addressing Stress and Anxiety In the Moment



Emotional Freedom Technique

According to HealthLinkBC, emotional freedom technique (EFT) is a method to help manage emotions and lower stress or anxiety. EFT, which is also aptly called tapping, involves tapping your fingertips on certain points on your hand, head, and torso while focusing on a particular issue or emotion. Stress can increase cortisol and adrenaline and raise blood pressure temporarily, contributing to chronic hypertension, which is a leading cause of kidney damage. Lowering stress and anxiety in turn helps to lower high blood pressure and better blood sugar control, while improving sleep and eating habits.

Deep Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing exercises can significantly reduce stress and anxiety for people with kidney disease who often face physical discomfort, fatigue, and emotional strain. It also improves oxygenation and circulation, which can be especially helpful in dialysis patients with fatigue or breathlessness. Kidney patients also face greater rates of insomnia, which has a negative impact on mental health. Try breathing exercises before bedtime. For more information, visit kidneywellnesshub.ca/sleeping-well.



Music Therapy

Music is a powerful tool for reducing stress and anxiety, with strong support from both scientific research and clinical practice. It activates the parasympathetic nervous system, lowers heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels, and distracts from negative thoughts and worry loops. Music with slow, calming rhythms induce a meditative state. At kidneywellnesshub.ca/musical-therapy you can learn more and see a sample playlist.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a systematic technique where you tense and then relax different muscle groups in the body, one at a time. It typically starts from the toes and works upward to the head, or vice versa. PMR aims to lower heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels. The process helps you become more aware of physical tension and teaches how to release it consciously promoting relaxation, improved sleep and decreased anxiety. Visit bcrenal.ca to learn more about PMR.





Wayne Doba and Andrea Conway,
2025 Vancouver rEvolver Festival
(photo credit: Julian Fok)



Wayne Doba and Andrea Conway, 2025 Vancouver rEvolver Festival
(photo credit: Julian Fok)

Dancing Through the Darkness

The Mental Health Benefits of Creative Expression

Andrea Conway, a professional performer, had lived with hereditary kidney disease until it progressed to the point where transplantation became the best treatment option. By then, she was on dialysis, her physical abilities had declined, and she was on the verge of depression. Performance was her world. She tried to continue performing professionally while on dialysis but eventually realized it was no longer feasible.

"I was thinking, am I ever gonna get to perform again?" Andrea said recently in an interview with Kidney PLUGGED IN. It was a dual setback. As a Cirque du Soleil performer for years before forming a tap-dancing duo with her husband, Wayne, not only was she losing her livelihood, she was also losing an outlet with proven benefits for our mental health.

In 2018, she underwent a kidney transplant—a deeply

transformative experience during which it is entirely natural to feel a mix of emotions in the aftermath. The one-year celebration mark coincided with the start of COVID. For Andrea, as anxiety and depression began to set in, Wayne insisted that they keep dancing. "That changed everything," she said. "Even in the most serious moments, Wayne has the ability to make me laugh."

In embracing the craft that helped her get through her darkest times, she and Wayne created *By Our Side-An Entertaining Transplant Story* — a "World Class" comedy tap dance show that shares their experience of sudden kidney failure, dialysis, and everything involved with finding an organ donor. Now touring and receiving rave reviews, the show is a journey filled with imagination, hope, loss, unexpected friendship, and heroism.

Performing creatively encourages presence and flow, helping individuals shift focus away from anxiety or negative thought patterns. For many, the act of sharing their creativity with others also fosters a sense of connection and belonging, combating feelings of isolation. Over time, regular participation in creative performance can contribute to improved mood, resilience, and overall emotional wellbeing.



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