

Dialysis care at Continental Nursing and Rehabilitation

When kidney function needs a boost

The statistics are sobering – kidney disease is on the rise in the United States today.

One in 10 American adults (more than 20 million people) now have some level of chronic kidney disease.

End-stage renal disease is especially hard-hitting among African Americans at a rate that is three times higher than for Caucasians.

The combination of obesity and eating a diet high in salt and rich in calories has taken its toll, leading to long-term hypertension and Type II diabetes with terrible end results on kidney function.

“I have a whole new respect for kidneys since getting into this line of work,” registered nurse Shawndale Pugh said. “I’ve learned that we all need to teach our kids how to eat better so they will be healthy adults.”

Pugh oversees the dialysis treatment program at Continental Nursing and Rehabilitation, 5336 N. Western Ave.

“Kidneys are a wonderful and perfectly designed machine,” he said. “What they accomplish for our bodies and the fact that we’re blessed with two when we really only need one – is amazing. It has



Shawndale Pugh RN, who has 17 years’ experience working with kidney patients, oversees the dialysis unit at Continental Nursing & Rehab Center.

made me very health conscious about my own habits, especially in staying hydrated and avoiding sugary drinks.”

Pugh notes that a healthy renal diet is low in salt, contains the right amount of daily calories, and includes such good sources of protein as fish and chicken.

Renal-smart diets

Kidneys flourish when we eat foods that contain the following:

Potassium – carrots, potatoes, bananas, oranges, cantaloupe

Phosphorus – beef, cheddar cheese, almonds, certain seafood

Sodium – soup/broth, bacon, canned spa-

ghetti sauce

Purine – split peas, tuna, pork, asparagus

Oxalates – green beans, cashews, tangerines, cocoa

Fluids – milk, coffee, lemonade, tea, water

Kidney function

The average kidney weighs in at just 2.8 to 3 pounds and plays a very powerful role in keeping us well. Pugh listed the top five functions healthy kidneys perform for our body:

1. Remove wastes and extra fluid
2. Control blood pressure
3. Make red blood cells
4. Keep bones healthy
5. Control pH (acid – base balance) levels

Causes of kidney impairment

Kidney function can become compromised from long-term hypertension, diabetes, blunt trauma, congenital defects, lupus, congestive heart failure and rheumatoid arthritis, among other issues.

If kidneys become too disabled to function on their own, dialysis care may be an option.

Dialysis is a life-saving mechanical pro-

cess for removing waste and excess water from the blood when the kidneys are no longer functioning.

At Continental, the unit operates 12 hours a day, five days a week, with a staff of four. Patients are assigned their own machine in the unit to decrease cross contamination, and treatment times vary between two and three hours per session.

“Once hooked up to the machine, dialysis is a painless procedure,” Pugh explained. “It is not a cure – the underlying medical condition creating the need for dialysis is what has to be treated, if possible.”

At Continental’s dialysis unit, patients range in age from their late 40s to their early 60s. Currently, the unit treats 19 in-patients.

“What I like best about my work here is the ability to care for the whole patient and give them back some quality of life again,” Pugh said. “From providing patient education to identifying someone who is depressed or scared, we get to know our patients very well and can supply them with whatever extra emotional support they may need to feel better.”