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In the United States, there are over 35 million persons who have chronic kidney disease, which

accounts for one in every seven adults. Unfortunately, many millions also have chronic kidney disease and are not aware of the diagnosis.

However, having chronic kidney disease may mean having to alter some of your lifestyle habits to protect your kidney function, but many of us must make sacrifices to stay healthy: limiting fats and high calorie drinks, increasing vegetables and healthy greens, and engaging in regular physical activity.

However, with hypertension and diabetes being the leading causes of kidney disease, it is imperative that these conditions be managed closely to slow the progression of kidney disease. In the early stages of kidney disease, there may be minimal to no restrictions to diet, beyond those of your existing medical diagnoses. This means adherence to your medications as prescribed, checking blood sugars often, and following a diet that is low sodium for better blood pressure control. For many patients, this is an opportunity to take advantage of a dietitian that may be offered by your insurance benefits to assist you with staying healthy.

Chronic kidney disease can often be accompanied by fatigue as the disease

LIVING WELL with Kidney Disease

progresses. However, this may be caused by other factors such as chronic anemia (low blood count), elevated blood sugars, or high blood pressure. By maintaining regular physical activity, you can boost your energy levels, improve your mood, and even lower your blood sugar levels as well as your blood pressure. Simple exercise, such as walking, improves blood flow to legs and muscles, which in turn leads to improved stamina and endurance.

When the weather permits, walking outdoors can be much more stimulating and enjoyable if you are not prone to allergies. It is important to stay hydrated while remembering to keep your fluid limitations within your doctor's recommendation. Consider joining forces with friends or family to engage in walking routines at your nearest indoor mall. Take advantage of the opportunity to have a meal together.

For many patients, the diagnosis of end stage kidney disease can come as a surprise, with many being told of the need for dialysis treatments at the same time as the kidney failure diagnosis. Emotionally, this can be a devastating diagnosis, which can result

in depression and difficulty coping with the diagnosis. Know that you are not alone on your journey. Mental health support is always available, whether in person or via telehealth. Whether with behavioral therapy alone or in conjunction with medication, mental health can be treated so that you can improve your mood and get involved with selfcare. Talk to your doctor and get the help you need to enjoy the summers, participate in the fall festivals, and throw snowballs with your neighbor's kids or take that cruise you have on your bucket list.

While having chronic kidney disease may require you to make lifestyle changes, it should not define who you are. Each day is another opportunity to appreciate the 'present' – the gift of another 24 hours that we did not have before. Use it to your advantage: connect to a support community of friends and family, and get involved in the things that bring you joy, whatever that may be. Remember, where there is joy, there is laughter, and with laughter comes the benefits of decreased stress, enhanced heart health, and increased optimism. Try it, you might find that you have a lot to laugh about.