



National Kidney Foundation®

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Nation's Largest Kidney Patient and Professional Organizations Urge Action to Protect Patients During Reopening

The National Kidney Foundation and American Society of Nephrology join to advance the unique needs of kidney patients during COVID-19

May 21, 2020, New York, NY — In a [detailed letter sent](#) today to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the nation's largest kidney patient and professional organizations urged the Administration to address the unique needs of kidney patients as the country reopens. The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) and the American Society of Nephrology (ASN), who together represent 37 million Americans affected by kidney disease and the physicians who care for them, called upon the Administration to implement a set of recommendations regarding COVID-19 testing, supplies and vaccination, dialysis, elective surgeries, organ donation, transplantation, and drug supplies.

Specifically, the organizations advocated that as states start to implement the "[Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#)", that the Administration adopt policies and procedures to ensure kidney patients, their families and clinicians have adequate access to personal protective equipment, priority access to COVID-19 testing, and early access to a vaccine once it is developed; support end-stage renal disease (ESRD) patients' ability to safely access dialysis services and other related care; prioritize the safe resumption of organ transplantation, which has significantly declined as a result of COVID-19; extend and build upon temporary policy changes that may be required to meet the ongoing needs of kidney patients; and address the needs of patients who develop [acute kidney injury](#) (AKI) as a result of COVID-19 infection.

"Kidney patients continue to be extremely vulnerable to severe COVID-19 infection and we must take every precaution to help protect them as the country reopens," said Kevin Longino, CEO of National Kidney Foundation and a kidney transplant patient. "While kidney patients should continue to shelter in place during reopening; they also need access to a healthcare system which can support their need to isolate and socially distance. Prioritizing the protection of dialysis and transplant patients will help mitigate the risk of resurgence for COVID-19, protect the most susceptible patients, and assist states with achieving a balance between reopening their economies and ensuring the health of the public."

"COVID-19 has made an indelible impact on the process of care for patients with kidney diseases," said Anupam Agarwal, MD, FASN, President of the American Society of Nephrology. "The Administration moved

quickly and decisively to address the safe continuity of care for people with kidney diseases. Now we must take the long view to prioritize and expand access to safe and effective treatments and therapies while also addressing the vast clinical consequences of COVID-19 infection on kidney health. We welcome the continued support, partnership, and leadership of the Administration to address this particularly vulnerable patient population.”

Kidney patients are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 infection due to compromised immune systems, multiple comorbid conditions such as [diabetes](#), [high blood pressure](#) and [heart disease](#) among others, which increase their risk for COVID-19 complications, and because nearly 90% of patients with kidney failure use in-center [dialysis](#) treatments, which require frequent visits to dialysis centers.

Early data from New York City indicate that 20 to 40 percent of COVID-19 intensive care unit patients develop [kidney failure and need emergency dialysis](#). New data suggests that the mortality rate for patients on chronic dialysis who develop COVID-19 is in the range of 10-20% and for kidney transplant patients the mortality associated with COVID-19 may be as high as a staggering 30%.

Support for government intervention to help address supply shortages and acute kidney injury as a result of COVID-19 is strong. A recent [National Kidney Foundation—Harris Poll Survey on COVID-19 and Kidney Health](#) found that two-thirds (65%) of Americans are concerned over **potential shortages of dialysis equipment** from COVID-19. And the majority of Americans, (87%), support the federal government stepping in to address any shortages found in hot spots and to provide funding for equipment, supplies, and staff needed to care for patients with complications caused by the virus, such as acute kidney injury. Support is also high (87%) for the **federal government devoting more resources** towards the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of kidney disease and significantly increasing funding for kidney research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a result of kidney-related illness resulting from COVID-19.

“It is our hope and intention that the recommendations NKF and ASN have put forward will best advance the critical needs facing kidney patients during COVID-19, and offer an opportunity for safely reintegrating into their communities during the reopening phases taking place nationwide,” added Longino. “We sincerely thank the Administration for their efforts thus far to protect kidney patients and look forward to working closely with them to implement our recommendations.”

Kidney Disease Facts

In the United States, 37 million adults are estimated to have [chronic kidney disease](#)—and more than 90 percent are unaware they have it. 1 in 3 American adults are at risk for chronic kidney disease. [Risk factors for kidney disease](#) include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and family history. People of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander descent are at increased risk for developing the disease. African Americans are 3 times more likely than Whites, and Hispanics are nearly 1.5 times more likely than non-Hispanics to develop end-stage renal disease (kidney failure).

About the National Kidney Foundation

[The National Kidney Foundation](#) (NKF) is the largest, most comprehensive, and longstanding patient-centric organization dedicated to the awareness, prevention, and treatment of kidney disease in the U.S. For more information about NKF, visit www.kidney.org.

About American Society of Nephrology

Since 1966, [ASN](#) has been leading the fight to prevent, treat, and cure kidney diseases throughout the world by educating health professionals and scientists, advancing research and innovation, communicating new knowledge, and advocating for the highest quality care for patients. ASN has more than 21,000 members representing 131 countries. For more information, please visit www.asn-online.org or contact the society at 202-640-4660.

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