

# Nephrology Supportive Care Clinic (NSSC)

## Patient Information – Nephrology Department

Please read this guide carefully as it provides information about your Nephrology Supportive Care Clinic (NSSC) appointment.

### Supportive Care Clinic

People who live with chronic kidney disease (CKD) sometimes need additional help and support to make important decisions or treat difficult symptoms.

The NSSC is a combined clinic run by both the Nephrology (kidney) and Palliative Care Services. The NSSC focuses on high quality care for patients and their carers who:

- Are not treated with dialysis for kidney failure
- Are treated with dialysis but have distressing symptoms caused by their kidney disease
- Are being treated with dialysis and are deciding whether or not it is still right for them

**It is important to remember that management of symptoms is very important, regardless of whether you are having dialysis treatment. Symptom management is essential to maximise your quality of life.**

The aims of the NSSC are to:

- Provide support for you and your carers
- Treat and reduce symptoms of kidney disease
- Provide information so you can make decisions about treatment and dialysis
- Provide the opportunity to discuss treatment options
- Talk about planning for the future such as how you would like to be looked after as your health deteriorates

**The team is made up of the following members:**

- Kidney Specialists (Nephrologists) (Dr Nick Cross and Dr Suetonia Palmer)
- Palliative Care Specialist (Dr Kate Grundy)
- Nephrology & Palliative Care Registrars (Doctors)
- Nephrology Clinical Nurse Specialists

### Why am I coming to the nephrology NSSC?

One of your kidney doctors in discussion with other members of the kidney team has asked you to come to the NSSC as they think you would benefit from the input, advice and support of the team. Some reasons could include:

- You might be struggling with symptoms of kidney disease
- Your kidneys might be failing, and you might be considering options for care without starting dialysis
- You might be finding living with dialysis increasingly difficult

## Appointment letter

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Your appointment letter will contain details of your first appointment, such as the date, time and where the clinic is held. The clinic is held in the Nephrology Department, not the Christchurch Hospital Outpatients department.

## Preparing for your appointment

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Having a hospital appointment can make you feel quite anxious and being prepared for your appointment is useful. We encourage you to bring a support person/relative/whanau with you when you come.

## Symptoms score sheet

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You will be asked to complete a symptom score sheet before you come to the clinic. This is an assessment tool that helps the doctors identify your most troublesome symptoms so that these issues can be talked about during your appointment.

## Questions you may like to ask

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It is important for you to have all the information you need to enable you to make decisions about your healthcare. To help you may want to make a list of any questions you may wish to ask the doctor, so they are not forgotten. These could include:

- Will dialysis improve my quality of life?
- What will happen if I decide not to have or start dialysis?
- How long will I live? What will happen to me as my kidney function gets worse?
- If I decide not to have dialysis, how do I tell my family?
- What if I have pain or discomfort?
- Who will help support me and my family?

## Arriving at your appointment

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Please allow plenty of time to get to your appointment as running late can be stressful. Please let the staff at the Nephrology Department reception know when you have arrived. The secretary will know that you are coming and will ask you to take a seat in the waiting area before you are called for your appointment.

## Your appointment

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You will be seen by at least one of the specialists. Often two of the specialists see you together. The appointment will be for approximately one hour. This allows plenty of time for discussion and questions so please feel free to ask as many as you need. Your symptoms will be reviewed, and appropriate medications may be prescribed to manage these.

Other health professionals such as a social worker or dietitian may also be available. If they are not available and you need to see them, you will be referred, and they will contact you outside of the clinic appointment.

## After the clinic

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You will continue to receive on-going treatment for your kidney disease from the Nephrology team and your General Practitioner. Further appointments at the NSCC may be appropriate.

The Nephrology team and your General Practitioner will receive a letter from the supportive care team. This will summarise all the issues and any advice we might have for your on-going care. You are welcome to a copy of this letter. If you would like a copy, please ask.

## Changing or cancelling your appointment

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If you wish to change or cancel your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible by telephoning the Nephrology Department on (03) 364 0655.

## Interpretation and sign language

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If you need an interpreter or sign language services, please contact us before your appointment using the contact details below.

## Contact details

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Nephrology department: (03) 364 0655.

## Extra information

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- Write down the names of the members of your health care team. This can help you to get to know and recognise the people you will be working with
- Contact the Nephrology Department (03) 364 0655 if you have any questions
- Give us any feedback that can help us improve our service. We hope you have a positive experience, but we need to hear about anything that doesn't work well so we can make changes to the way we do things, so we can better help our future patients

For more information about:

- hospital and specialist services, go to [www.cdhb.health.nz](http://www.cdhb.health.nz)
- your health and medication, go to [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz) ,  
<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz>
- [www.cdhb.health.nz/Patients-Visitors](http://www.cdhb.health.nz/Patients-Visitors)