



American Association of  
Kidney Patients

The Independent Voice of Kidney Patients Since 1969™

## Home Dialysis was Right for Me!

---

Keith Sloan knew there could be consequences for not controlling his diabetes. But he never thought being a non-compliant patient would lead him to the life he has lived and the mission he is currently on. Keith is on a mission to help other kidney patients slow the progression of their disease and to tell others why he chose to dialyze at home.

The symptoms were there: retaining lots of fluids, legs swelling and abnormal lab results. In March of 2005, a visit to a nephrologist confirmed Keith's fears. His kidneys were failing. "Well, I was a little surprised, but also a little bit understanding because of the fact that I had hypertension for about three years at the time. The reason I say I understood is because I am a registered nurse."

As a registered nurse, Keith knew hypertension and diabetes were the leading causes of kidney disease. He also dealt with non-compliant patients before. The nurse was now the patient.

Keith's nephrologist explained his options: in-center hemodialysis or a transplant. He had a couple of months to consider his options before his kidney function dropped below 15 percent. Keith spent the next year going to a dialysis center three days a week for three to four hour treatments. He also continued to work three days a week, 12 hour shifts. The schedule got the better of him although he received lots of support from his boss and coworkers at Venice Regional Medical Center in Venice, Florida. "The staff made sure I could attend my doctor appointments. They really did a terrific job of looking after me." Despite the support, work and dialysis wiped him out most days. Keith says he was tired all the time. He did not spend a lot of quality time with his wife, and fishing or golfing was out of the question.

Keith's world changed in the fall of 2006. His wife and her sister, who are also both nurses, attended the AAKP's 33rd Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida. "They received a bunch of information and talked to several people while at the Convention," according to Keith. "One of the other attendees mentioned he did home hemodialysis. He told them how liberating home dialysis was. How it gave you the freedom to do what you want with your dialysis in terms of being comfortable during your treatment. He also talked about the opportunity to regulate your lab results so you don't have the great swings some patients experience."

Keith's wife came home from the Convention excited about the possibility of home hemodialysis. Keith approached his nephrologist and a nurse at the dialysis center about dialyzing at home. With their

medical background and Keith's otherwise good health condition, Keith and his wife were considered great candidates for home hemodialysis. Both Keith and his wife worked very closely with a nurse instructor and a representative from NxStage™, who provided his dialysis machine, to learn to do dialysis at home. Keith remembers when he first started treatment at home. "We had some alarms here and there, which always happen when you're dealing with any type of health treatment. We just dealt with them."

Life on dialysis got a little less stressful for Keith and his wife. He continued to work full time as a nurse. Only now, on his dialysis days, he had more energy after the treatment. He was able to get in a golf game every once in a while. He and his wife took weekend trips out of town. But most importantly, he says home dialysis allowed him to spend more quality time with his wife of 21 years. "I was able to hold a meaningful conversation with her. I had the energy to take her out to dinner. I wasn't just grabbing something to eat when I got home and crawling into bed after my treatments."

And life just kept getting better for Keith. After a little more than a year on in center dialysis and seven months of home hemodialysis, Keith received the phone call he had dreamed of. A kidney was available. And on June 15, 2007, he received a new kidney from a deceased donor. "I am unbelievably happy to receive this new kidney. Unfortunately, an individual had to lose their life."

Keith is now looking towards the future. "I don't know what the end result will be, but I am excited about my future, especially spending time with my wife. She has been incredibly supportive. I also hope to give back to the kidney community by sharing my story. I hope my story encourages others to remain positive. You can live a productive life with kidney disease."

When asked if he would recommend home dialysis to other patients, Keith says, "If you have a partner who is willing to work with you, home dialysis is definitely the way to go because you maintain your independence. You maintain a comfort level because you're in your own home. I have a picture of me sitting in my living room hooked up to the machine with my dog in my lap. There's nothing more comfortable than to be in your own surroundings." Keith also acknowledges that some people who go to a center to dialyze are more at ease knowing that a professional is there to help if something goes wrong. "I would not steer them away from in-center dialysis. But personally, comfort level, you cannot beat treatment at home!"

Keith is keeping his promise. He and his wife spoke at the 34th Annual AAKP Convention in St. Louis. Keith is also scheduled to speak to other kidney patient groups about home dialysis in his community.

**Jerome A. Bailey is the Editor of At Home with AAKP and Communications Manager for AAKP. This article originally appeared in the March 2008 issue of At Home with AAKP.**

- **Written by:** Jerome A. Bailey
- **Posted in:** Renal Dialysis