



American Association of
Kidney Patients

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Living Life on My Terms



When I joined the Army, I never imagined my kidneys would end my military career. I was just 19 years old when a routine doctor's appointment revealed that I had high blood pressure. By 1995 - just three years later – my blood work revealed that my kidneys were shutting down, and I was forced to leave the Army.

Like so many patients with kidney disease, I was able to avoid dialysis for a couple years with medication, diet and exercise. But by 1997, I started in-center dialysis treatments, a routine that became my full-time job. I had the morning shift at the center so I'd wake up at 5:30 a.m. and get on my machine by 6:30 a.m. After four hours of therapy, I was wiped out and unable to do anything but sleep. I lost so much time during my eight years receiving in-center therapy. It was difficult to go about my life even on my off-days because I felt tired or sick, and traveling was difficult.

Then, I transitioned to peritoneal dialysis (PD). With PD, my blood was cleansed through my peritoneum through a tube in my abdomen. I felt much better thanks to the more frequent therapy this treatment offered, and the freedom of dialyzing on my own time was convenient. I was devastated when I contracted a horrible fungal infection and was hospitalized. Due to the infection, PD was no longer an option for me, just four years after I'd started the therapy. While I knew that PD could fail to work for me one day, it didn't make the experience of losing the ability to dialyze at home any easier.

I didn't want to go back in-center. Luckily, one of my nurses knew about home hemodialysis and mentioned the NxStage System One. A portable home hemodialysis device, the System One allows patients to dialyze at home and on their own time. The system hooks into a home's existing electrical and plumbing system and is small enough

to sit atop a side table. I had never heard of this treatment option before and was excited to learn that it might afford me the ability to continue home therapy.

After being released from the hospital, my wife, Jackie, and I began home hemodialysis training at DaVita First Colonial in Virginia. We finished training after a few weeks and soon set up my NxStage home machine in our family room.



The System One didn't stay in our home for long. Jackie and I took the machine on the road almost immediately. We visited New York City and Toronto. We would simply hook up the System One in our hotel room and schedule my dialysis around our travel plans.

I never knew how grateful I'd be for the machine until 2011, when Jackie and I welcomed our first child. Now, I'm able to be a full-time dad while Jackie continues to work as a logistics analyst. Having this time with my son without the infringement of an in-center dialysis schedule, and being healthy enough to care for him, is invaluable.

Thanks to my good health, I've also rediscovered an old hobby – working out. At first, with more health and energy, I started exercising a couple times each week. I've increased my activity level, and last year I trained for and rode in Tour DaVita, a 200-plus mile bike ride in Iowa. The tour's goal is to raise awareness about chronic kidney disease and funding to help improve kidney health and save lives in underserved communities around the world.

My patient care assistant, Mandy Votaw from DaVita First Colonial, trained as well. We even biked together a few times in preparation for the three-day race. We headed out to Iowa in mid-September and supported each other during the 200 mile stretch. Mandy was on hand to be a care partner to me and another NxStage patient, Thomas, who was also riding in the race. We dialyzed on the System One in an RV that followed us during the event.

Three years after starting home hemodialysis, I'm so happy and healthy that I've removed my name from the kidney transplant list. I've stopped taking my cholesterol medication, and I finally have control over those pesky phosphorus levels.

From being a hands-on dad to biking 200 miles, the NxStage System One has allowed me to live my life on my terms. The convenience is great, but I can't put a price on the quality of life and medical benefits I've experienced.

- **Written by:** Alphonso Jefferson
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