

WORTH THE WAIT

Morgan Kimbrough is ready to get on with his life – after dialysis.

He's been making the trip to Mercy Dialysis Center in northeast Cedar Rapids three times a week, four hours at a time, for the past 3½ years. If you do the math, that's a total of more than 2,000 hours spent connected to a dialysis machine. He passes the time by surfing the Web, playing Candy Crush on his iPad and catching an occasional nap. At age 47, it's not how he'd like to be spending his time.

"I'm ready to go back to normal life. I'm ready to go back to work full-time and have more energy for my daughters," says Morgan. "I really didn't want to go on dialysis, but what choice did I have? I didn't want to live like this but I sucked it up, started dialysis, and here I am."

EARLY SIGNS

Although Morgan didn't recognize it as an early sign of kidney failure, he developed hypertension (or high blood pressure) in 1997. As a precaution, his doctor checked his kidney function.

"What he told me was that, if my blood pressure didn't come down to normal levels, I would eventually have kidney failure. At the time, I didn't think that would ever happen," says Morgan.

Morgan largely dismissed the doctor's advice and didn't make any significant lifestyle changes. He also went through a two-year period without health insurance, so he

stopped going to the doctor – until he developed a persistent cold in 2007.

"I went to my doctor and he tested my kidney function. It was down to 50 percent. It all happened rapidly. In 13 months it went from 50 to 15 percent. By 2009, Dr. Yacoub told me I would have to start dialysis soon," he says.

Morgan had late stage kidney disease, as do 33 million other Americans, and many don't even realize it.

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

"Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a disease of the kidney not doing its job," says Dr. Fadi Yacoub, Morgan's nephrologist with Internist Associates of Iowa. "The kidney's main function is to filter toxic waste and, if the body can't do that, it starts

accumulating. Dialysis is necessary to clean the blood."

Dr. Yacoub says patients with early-stage CKD may develop high blood pressure and diabetes. Later, flu-like symptoms may appear, such as nausea, poor appetite and fatigue. By that time, the disease has often progressed too far to reverse it. Dialysis then becomes inevitable and, without a transplant, the prognosis for those patients is not good.

"The life expectancy for those on dialysis is about five years," says Yacoub. "It's as bad as colon cancer in terms of survival rates."

A medical home helps prevent health problems and helps keep ongoing health conditions, like Morgan Kimbrough's chronic kidney disease, from becoming worse.



Morgan Kimbrough spends four hours, three times a week, getting dialysis at Mercy Dialysis Center. Now at the top of the transplant list at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, he's just waiting for the phone call to notify him it is time to do his kidney transplant.

WAITING FOR A TRANSPLANT

After 3½ years on dialysis, Morgan says he is now at the top of the transplant list at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He keeps his cell phone close at hand at all times, waiting for news of an available kidney. Mercy Dialysis has a collaborative relationship with University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics to ensure streamlined, coordinated care.

"It will definitely be a new lease on life," says Morgan. "I just have to wait it out. I just

wish it would hurry up and happen. I'm ready."

Morgan says until that time he's thankful for the life-sustaining treatments he receives at Mercy Dialysis Center and its close relationship with the University of Iowa transplant program. Mercy Dialysis was the first in the Cedar Rapids area and has served patients for nearly 30 years. Mercy Dialysis is also non-profit, with the primary purpose of patient care.



Fadi Yacoub, MD
Medical Director
Mercy Dialysis Center

UPDATE:
On Nov. 1, Morgan got the call he'd been waiting for. He received a kidney transplant at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics the next day. Morgan says the surgery went well and the kidney started functioning almost immediately, so there's been no need for further dialysis.
"It's like a dream come true. I really have a new kidney. It's like I have a second chance at life," he says.