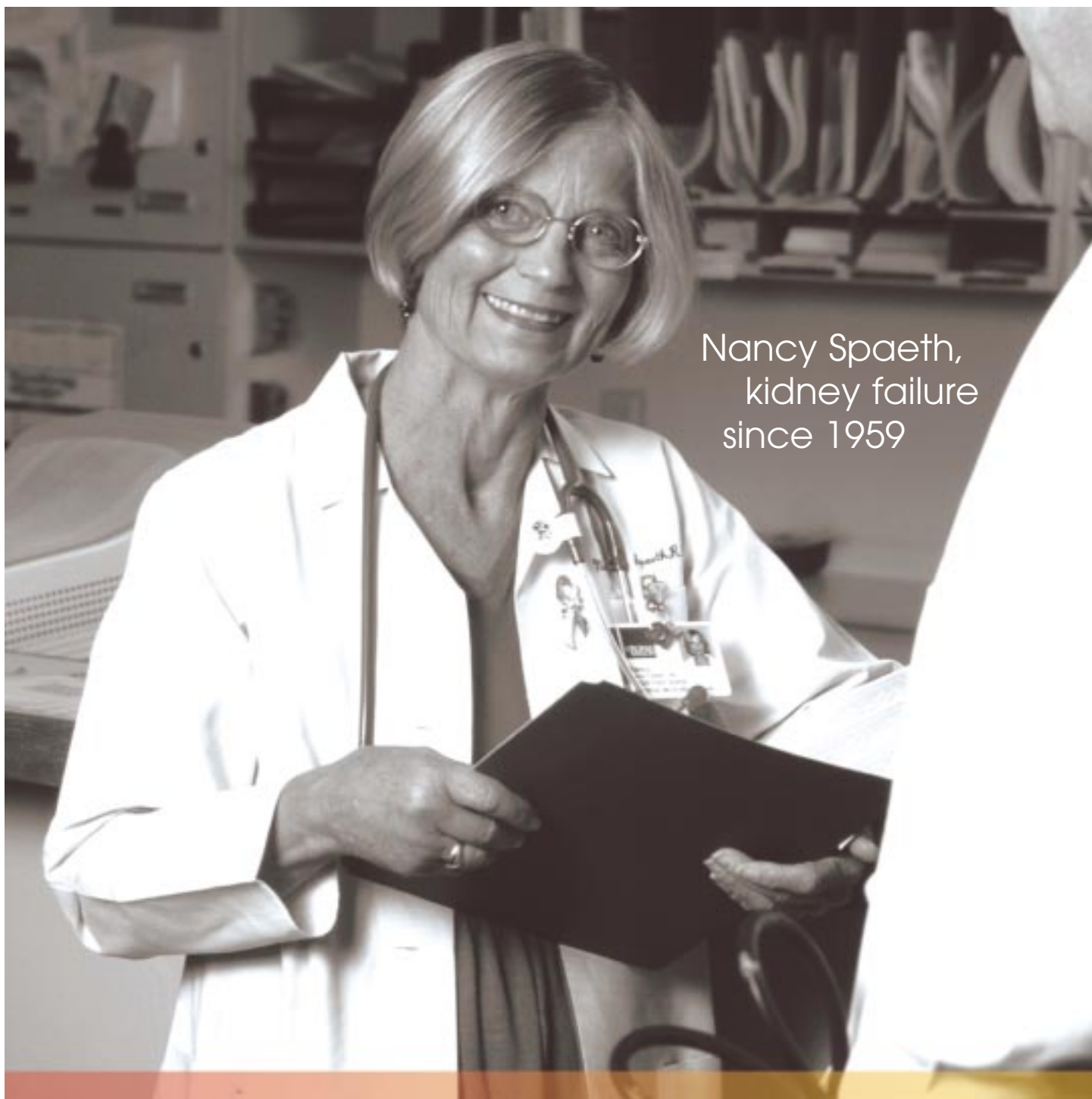




**Introduction to Kidney School:  
Living Successfully with Kidney Disease**



Nancy Spaeth,  
kidney failure  
since 1959

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## About Kidney School

Welcome to the print version of Kidney School! Kidney School will help you learn to take an active role in your healthcare decision making. Research suggests that kidney patients who become active partners in their care are more likely to live long and live well.

Kidney School is an on-line learning program designed to help people understand kidney disease and its treatment, adjust to kidney disease, make good medical choices, and live as fully as possible. You decide which modules to read and when—so what you learn is entirely up to you.

Kidney School was developed to:

- Offer free, up-to-date, research-based information, at your own pace.
- Help you learn what to expect and what questions to ask.
- Provide the tools you need to self-manage your care so you can stay healthier and keep doing the activities you enjoy.

Kidney School is a project of the **Life Options Rehabilitation Program**. Sponsored by Amgen Inc. and administered by the non-profit Medical Education Institute, Life Options is a program of research and research-based educational materials to help people with kidney disease live long and live well.

All Life Options programs, including Kidney School, are guided by the Life Options Rehabilitation Advisory Council (LORAC), a national expert panel of patients, doctors, nurses, researchers, social workers, dietitians, physical therapists, and administrators.

All content for the Life Options program and for Kidney School is developed by Life Options staff and reviewed by members of the multidisciplinary LORAC and by additional patients and kidney professionals. Life Options and Kidney School content is entirely independent of and not influenced by its corporate sponsor(s).

Kidney School reviewers include:

- Sally Burrows-Hudson, MSN, RN, CNN
- Ann Compton, RN, MSN, CNN
- Karren King, MSW, ACSW, LCSW
- Jean Kammerer, BSN, RN, CNN
- Derrick Latos, MD, FACP
- Stephanie McIntyre, RD
- Maureen McCarthy, MPH, RD, CS
- Jo Reeder, PT, MCSP
- Brian O'Moore (patient)
- Bruce Schultz (patient)
- Nancy Spaeth, RN (patient)
- Patty Stewart (patient)

A special thank you is extended to members of the Dialysis Support mail list at [www.yahogroups.com](http://www.yahogroups.com), who allowed themselves to be quoted, took the time to review Kidney School, and who provide constant inspiration through their compassion, willingness to share, and ability to live fully with kidney disease.

# Introduction to Kidney School— Living Successfully with Kidney Disease

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**W**elcome to Kidney School! Your interest in this program probably means that you or someone close to you has been diagnosed with a kidney problem. If so, you are not alone.

More than 5,000 people each week learn that they have kidney disease. You may be searching for information, encouragement, or hope to learn how to manage life with kidney disease. If so, you've come to the right place.

You *can* live long and live well with kidney disease. Kidney School, offered by the Life Options Rehabilitation Program, is designed to help you learn how.

## **You hold the key that unlocks a long and fulfilling life.**

You or someone close to you has chronic kidney disease and this means certain changes need to be made. But you can have a long, active, and meaningful life if you want it—and if you take your job seriously.



What job, you might be asking? I didn't ask for kidney disease. Why should I have to live with all of the changes and hassles that go along with it?

You're right, you didn't ask for this or deserve it. No one does. But now that you have been told you have kidney disease, you must understand that you are the one who can make the daily decisions that will help you stay as healthy as possible.

But wait a minute. What about the doctors and nurses who tell me what to do? Aren't they the experts? Shouldn't I listen to them?

Of course you should listen and consult with them as needed. Your healthcare team is a vital part of managing your kidney disease. But they treat dozens of patients and may only see you at clinic visits. Who then makes all of the *daily* decisions about food choices, taking medications, staying active, showing up for treatment, etc.?

## **The answer, of course, is you.**

You are the only one who can make those important daily decisions that add up to a healthy life for you or for those you're responsible for. This means that you need to become an expert on kidney disease.

No, you don't need to get a medical degree. Your job is to become an expert in how kidney disease affects you or your loved one. This means learning all you can about how kidneys work and what happens when they stop working, treatment options, medications, and so on.

Becoming an expert means looking for and absorbing information. And that is what Kidney School is all about: giving you accurate, useful, and interesting information that will help you to be an expert.

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In fact, hundreds of people who are living with kidney disease have told us that there are three Keys to a Long Life:

- *A positive attitude* – finding the good side of things
- *Getting answers* – asking questions, becoming an expert
- *Taking action* – following the treatment plan

Kidney School is organized into modules. Each module addresses an important topic that every non-medical kidney expert ought to know about. The modules are full of practical information that you can use every day. After you've gone through the module, you can take a short quiz to measure what you've learned.

You can read the modules in any order that interests you. We suggest that you start with Module 1:

*Kidneys: How They Work, How They Fail, What You Can Do.* This module will give you an overview of kidney function and disease, and some very helpful ways to start sorting out your own life with kidney disease.

We at Kidney School want to help you feel confident about your knowledge, your life skills, and your ability to speak to your healthcare team in an informed way. Most of all, we want to give you a sense of hope. We know many people with kidney disease who are living full and active lives. In our research, we've learned things from them that we will share with you in the Kidney School modules.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about Kidney School and hope to hear from you soon. You can reach us by e-mail at [info@kidneyschool.org](mailto:info@kidneyschool.org).

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## Legal Disclaimer

Your medical condition is unique to you. If you have questions about your condition and what it will mean for you in the future, please consult your personal doctor.

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