

Preventive Health for Patients on Dialysis



Patients on dialysis have less ability to fight infection and are prone to other health problems. There are simple measures that you can take to stay healthy. These steps have always been important, however, now that you are on dialysis, they are more important than ever.



Now that you are on dialysis, you are more likely to catch an illness **AND** are much more likely to be hospitalized or even die from getting a common infection.

Key Facts:

- You can get an infection from people who look healthy.
- Some germs can lead to worse infections in your blood and other areas of your body.
- You should get vaccinated against flu yearly. Getting the flu increases your chance of getting pneumonia.
- You should get vaccinated against pneumonia. If you are a smoker, your risks of getting pneumonia are higher.

What Are Some Tips to Stay Healthy?

Wash your hands carefully before you eat, before and after using the rest room, and before and after dialysis.

Vaccinations are important:

- Get a flu shot **EVERY** year.
- Get a pneumonia shot now if you have not had one, and then every five years.
- Get the Hepatitis B vaccine series.
- Encourage family members to be vaccinated so they do not get sick and so they can help protect you.

Mental Health

If you feel “blue” or “down”, or notice a loss of interest in activities or people, let us know. This is a very normal response to the stress of dialysis. We can help. Stay as active and interested in daily living and activities as possible. If you are working or going to school, your goal should be to continue to do this. Please ask us how we can tailor your dialysis treatment to your needs.



Other important steps for good health are:

- Keeping regularly scheduled appointments with your Primary Care Provider (PCP), Endocrinologist (if you have diabetes), and Cardiologist (heart doctor).
 - ✓ They communicate with your kidney doctor and your dialysis team.
 - ✓ They can evaluate any symptoms you are having, or help prevent complications before they happen.
- Following your doctor's advice about all preventive health guidelines like routine mammograms, Pap smears, and colonoscopies.

Diet and Exercise

- The dietician can help you plan and adjust to a dialysis-friendly diet.
- Your diet will be different if you also have diabetes and/or high blood pressure.
- It is helpful for you to exercise five times a week.
- Proper diet and exercise can also improve your sleep habits.

If you are a smoker, you should quit. You will feel better, have more energy, and sleep better. You will be less likely to get infections and will get better faster.

Teeth are Important

Healthy teeth and gums are important for your nutrition and your general health. Regular dental care can reduce the risk of heart disease.

- Make regularly scheduled appointments with the dentist and learn proper oral hygiene.
- Brushing and flossing can prevent gum disease.
- If you wear dentures, make sure you care for them and that they fit properly.
- If the cost of dental care is a problem, talk to us. There are resources available to help with the cost of dental care.

Sleep is Important

Rest and sleep help maintain overall health.

- Set a regular bedtime.
- Eliminate naps, or make them short and early.
- Spend more time outside during daylight.
- Turn off the TV and the computer at bedtime.
- Create a comfortable place to sleep (cool, quiet, enough room).
- Avoid alcohol before bed.
- Get enough exercise.

If you go for long periods struggling to get a good night's sleep, talk to your healthcare team.

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