

How to Live Well on Dialysis



Should you choose to dialyze at a facility, we can clean your blood and remove fluid. However, there are many things you can do for yourself when you are away from the clinic that can make your treatments easier. You can help prevent complications on the machine and reduce your chances of going to the hospital.



Care for Your Access!

If you have a graft or a fistula:

- Wash your access when you come to dialysis, even if you just showered.
- Remind the staff to check your access before putting in needles.
- Report any changes you notice in your access. Check it several times a day. Call the clinic if it is not “buzzing”, or if it feels really warm or really cold, or if it hurts.
- Do not wear tight sleeves, jewelry, or watches on your access arm.
- Do not allow caregivers to check your blood pressure or draw blood in that arm.
- Know what to do if your access starts bleeding at home.

Hemodialysis catheters are the number one cause of infection in dialysis patients.

If you have a catheter:

- Never get it wet. If it does get wet, call the clinic immediately.
- Call the clinic immediately if the skin over the catheter becomes red, swollen or puffy, if you have a temperature over 100, or if your neck hurts. This may mean you have an infection.
- Never remove the caps or clamps.
- You and the nurse should always wear a facemask when connecting the catheter or changing the dressing.
- Learn your unit’s policy about how often dressings are changed, and make sure that it is followed.
- Make sure that your doctor hears right away about any irritation or discharge at the catheter exit site, where it comes through the skin.

Work with us to get a permanent access placed as soon as possible so that we can remove your temporary catheter as quickly as possible.



Infection Control

Since you have kidney disease and you are on dialysis, you are at a higher risk for infections. Therefore:

- Wash your hands frequently, long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.
- Wash your access with soap and water in the unit before every treatment.
- Unless you are allergic, get a flu shot every year, and a pneumonia shot when needed.
- Get vaccinated for Hepatitis B.
- Avoid being around sick people.
- Use hand-sanitizer.
- Make sure the staff use clean gloves any time they touch your access.

Follow Your Dialysis Orders

Your dialysis orders are unique to you and your needs. To avoid hospitalization or uncomfortable treatments:

- Do not miss any treatments.
- Do not shorten your treatment time.
- Monitor and control your fluid between treatments.
- Notify the staff if you start to feel bad on treatment.
- Take your medications as prescribed.

Limit Salt and Fluid

If you gain less fluid between treatments, your treatments can be gentler. If you struggle with being thirsty, talk with us.

We can give you tips on how to make this easier. Controlling fluid is the best way to make your treatment more comfortable, with fewer complications like low blood pressure, nausea, headache or cramping.

Medications

If you take your medications as prescribed, you are less likely to be hospitalized.

At least once a month, bring to the clinic ALL the medications you take at home. This should include over the counter and herbal and dietary supplements, ointments, creams, drops, inhalers, and pills.

Let the staff know:

- If you start or stop any medications.
- If any doctor or hospital changes a dose, or starts or stops a medication.
- If you cannot afford your medications or are unable to pick them up.
- If your medications cause side effects.

Talk to a nurse or your physician before buying over the counter medications, especially cold medications and pain relievers.

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