KIDNEY FAILURE TREATMENT OPTIONS
Choosing What’s Best For You
What Kidneys Do

The kidneys are a pair of bean shaped organs located below your ribcage near the middle of your back.

Kidneys play a vital role in the body by filtering blood, removing waste and extra water, balancing electrolytes—sodium, potassium, chloride, and bicarbonate, and regulating blood pressure.

As kidneys filter blood they create urine/wastes which collect in the bladder until you go to the bathroom. If your body doesn’t remove these wastes, they build up in the blood and damage the body. For most people this damage occurs slowly over many years causing Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). CKD eventually results in End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) which is when dialysis or a transplant becomes necessary.
Treatment Options

This guide will cover four treatment options for your condition:

- Hemodialysis (in-center & home)
- Peritoneal Dialysis
- Kidney Transplantation
- Comfort Care

Introduction

When diagnosed with kidney disease, the key to feeling better is to follow the treatment plan developed by your doctor and other members of your care team including nurses, dietitians, and social workers. Following the advice of your medical professionals will help you lead the healthiest lifestyle possible.

When your kidneys are unable to remove extra fluid and waste from the body, dialysis is generally recommended. Dialysis helps alleviate many of the health problems people with kidney failure experience.

Dialysis can be done in a hospital, a dialysis clinic, or at home. Once you know all of your treatment options, you will make the decision of where you choose to have dialysis with the help of your doctor, other health care professionals, and your family.
Hemodialysis

During hemodialysis, blood is removed from the body and cleaned by a filter called a dialyzer, which acts like an artificial kidney.

While having hemodialysis, two needles are inserted into an access called a fistula or graft, which is placed into your forearm by a surgeon prior to starting treatment. One needle is attached to tubing which removes the blood, and the other needle is attached to another tube which returns the blood to your body after it is cleaned.

Dialysis is not painful, but sometimes people feel a little nauseated or dizzy during part of the treatment or experience a bit of discomfort when the needles are inserted into their arm. Generally, most patients begin to feel better during their treatment as toxins are removed from the body and fluids are returned to healthy levels.

Hemodialysis Can Be Done In A Dialysis Center Or At Home

In-Center Hemodialysis

If you choose to have treatments in a clinical setting, there are many dialysis centers located throughout neighborhoods, making therapy readily available. Your doctor will provide medical information to a center near you that can accommodate your needs.

Typically doctors will order in-center dialysis three days per week. Each treatment can take 4-5 hours. All dialysis centers have medical social workers and admissions staff who will help to arrange the days and times of your treatments.

Some Benefits Of In-Center Hemodialysis Include:

- Dialysis staff on-site to perform treatments
- No supplies stored at home
- Support and socialization with other patients
- Medical help immediately available in an emergency
Home Hemodialysis

Similar to in-center hemodialysis, Home Hemodialysis (HHD) uses a machine to filter waste and fluid from your blood. The machine used at home is much smaller in size than the one used in-center, but it is just as capable at cleaning waste from the body.

Patients and their care partners are trained to use the home hemodialysis machine so that they feel comfortable administering treatments. They are able to request staff-assistance in their home when necessary, and clinical and technical support is available 24 hours a day.

Home hemodialysis is typically done 5-6 times a week for 2.5-3.5 hours each session. Because the treatments are done more frequently, each session takes less time to remove toxins than in-center hemodialysis.

Some Benefits of Home Hemodialysis (HHD) Include:

- Treatments are done on your schedule in the comfort of home
- Frequency is closer to how healthy kidneys function
- Portable unit makes travel easy
- Treatments can be done overnight while you sleep
- Patients often have more energy and feel better after treatments
- Improved appetite and less restrictive dialysis diet
- May require fewer medications

Hemodialysis Access

There are two types of permanent access used to get blood for hemodialysis:

- Fistula: An access created by attaching a vein and artery together in the forearm.

- Graft: Created for weak veins, a soft tube is connected to an artery on one end and a vein on the other in the arm or thigh.

Both types of access are placed under the skin by a surgeon and may require an overnight stay at the hospital. A permanent access can take a few months to heal.

If a patient needs dialysis before a permanent access has healed, a temporary access can be created by placing a HD catheter in the neck or groin.
Peritoneal Dialysis

During Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) the blood is cleaned inside your body by using the peritoneal membrane located in your abdominal (peritoneal) cavity.

PD solution enters the peritoneal membrane from a bag of fluid called dialysate through a catheter that is located in the abdomen. The catheter is placed by a surgeon during a minor outpatient surgery a few weeks before starting dialysis and will remain in your abdomen as long as you are on Peritoneal Dialysis. When fluid enters and exits the peritoneal cavity it is referred to as an “exchange.” During PD, an exchange lasts 20-30 minutes.

A nurse will train you to perform PD treatments at home, and supplies will be shipped and stored at your house on a monthly basis.

There are two types of Peritoneal Dialysis:

- **Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD)** is performed 4 times a day for several hours. This type of PD requires the patient to manually connect, fill, and drain the fluid during each exchange.

- **Automated Peritoneal Dialysis (APD)** (sometimes referred to as Continuous Cycling Peritoneal Dialysis or CCPD) is performed automatically by a machine called a “cycler” for 8-10 hours while the patient sleeps. With this type of PD, the cycler performs all of the exchanges, and the patient doesn’t need to do anything except connect and disconnect tubing to the catheter.

Some Benefits of Peritoneal Dialysis Include:

- Treatments are done in the comfort of home
- No needles or blood
- Can do therapy while sleeping (APD)
- Portable unit is easy for travel
- No partner required to perform treatment

Peritoneal Dialysis Catheter

The type of permanent access used so dialysate can enter and exit the peritoneal cavity during PD is called a “catheter.”

The PD catheter is a small, soft tube that is placed through the wall of the abdomen by a surgeon during a minor outpatient surgery. It is located one inch below the navel and 4-6 inches of the tube remain outside of the body, easily hidden by clothing.
Kidney Transplantation

A transplant surgically replaces an unhealthy kidney in a patient with a working kidney from either a living donor or a deceased donor. Living donors can be either related or not related to the patient, and deceased donors are people who decide to donate their organs when they pass away.

Kidney transplant may be an option for some patients, but it is not always right for everyone. Your doctors, social worker, transplant coordinator and other medical professionals will look at your health and perform several medical tests to determine if transplant is right for you.

Candidates who are healthy enough for transplant are registered with the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS). As kidneys become available, the organization determines which registered candidate is the best match for the donated organ.

The wait for a matching kidney can take many years, however, patients who are transplanted successfully do not need to continue dialysis.

Transplant recipients remain on medications to keep the body from rejecting the donor organ for as long as the new kidney works. These medications can be expensive, but the transplant team will help find programs to assist with the cost.

Some Benefits of Transplantation Include:

- Nearly identical to having your own healthy kidneys
- No dialysis treatments
- Fewer diet and fluid restrictions
- Life becomes more normal
Comfort Care

Without dialysis or a kidney transplant, patients with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) cannot survive.

Comfort Care is the decision to not have any type of treatment for ESRD. This is a very personal decision and should be discussed with your physicians, family, clergy, and other important people in your life.

Questions To Consider When Choosing Treatment

- Do I want to continue working?
- Do I have obligations during the day such as going to school, taking care of children or elders, volunteering, or other responsibilities?
- Do I want to have an active role in my treatments and care?
- Do I want to lead an active lifestyle?
- Do I want the ability to travel or go on vacation with ease?
- Do I want to be in control of when I have treatments?
- Do I want to perform treatments at home?
- Do I have someone at home who can help me with treatments?
- Do I want to have treatments in a group environment with other patients?
- Do I have regular transportation to a treatment center?
Frequently Asked Questions

Who pays for dialysis?
Commercial/private insurance usually covers dialysis and treatment for kidney failure. If you don’t have commercial insurance, most people who need dialysis or a transplant qualify for Medicare even if they are under age 65. There are also a number of plans that cover dialysis including HMOs, Healthcare Exchange, Medicaid, state and local programs. The dialysis company you choose for treatment will have someone on staff to help you find programs and determine coverage.

Do I have to control what I eat when I’m on dialysis?
Diet is based on your personal health requirements determined by your doctor and dietitian. Although dialysis slightly reduces some diet restrictions, people on this type of therapy need to follow an eating plan regulated by their healthcare professionals.

Will I have fluid restrictions when I’m on dialysis?
Fluid intake is reduced when patients have chronic kidney disease and are on dialysis. Too much fluid can cause high blood pressure, shortness of breath, and heart damage. Discuss with your physician how much water you can drink each day.

Can dialysis patients travel?
Patients on dialysis can travel. If using a peritoneal dialysis cycler or home hemodialysis machine, these systems are portable. Patients arrange for supplies to be shipped ahead to their destination and the machines can easily pass through airport security. For patients on in-center dialysis, treatment coordinators at your center can help you find a clinic near your travel destination and arrange appointments for you during your trip.

Can I keep working if I’m on dialysis?
Peritoneal dialysis and home hemodialysis treatments are done on your schedule at home, so you are easily able to continue working. If you are receiving dialysis in-center, you will let the center know that you work and arrange a schedule around your hours.

Will I be able to continue hobbies and have a normal life on dialysis?
Yes. Patients on dialysis remain involved in their hobbies and community, see friends, and exercise. Your care team will work with you to make life as normal as possible.

Can I be on dialysis forever?
Yes. Patients can remain on dialysis for a lifetime and enjoy a good quality of life.

Do I have to stay on the same type of dialysis?
Although you will need dialysis for the rest of your life unless you receive a transplant, the type of dialysis you choose now may be able to be changed in the future under your doctor’s supervision.

Whatever treatment option you choose, you will be guided through your care by physicians, nursing staff, social workers, dietitians, certified technicians, and an entire care team. Health care professionals will help you manage all aspects of your disease and treatment. They will be with you to answer all questions and make your experience as stress-free as possible.

More information at www.HDSdialysis.com or toll-free 1.844.466.3463
Resources

American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)
www.aakp.org
1.800.749.2257

Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC)
1.866.877.4242
www.dialysispatients.org

National Forum of ESRD Networks
715.354.3735
www.esrdnetworks.org

National Kidney Foundation
1.800.622.9010
www.kidney.org

Medicare
1.800.633.4227
www.medicare.gov
DIALYSIS CARE CENTER - Parent Company of Home Dialysis Services has locations throughout the U.S. and is currently expanding. Visit our website to find a location near you, or call to see if service has recently been added to your city.

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