

## Kidney Disease: Dialysis

Dialysis is a lifesaving treatment when you have kidney failure. But it is very complicated. It can be hard to understand why your treatments are done the way they are.

It is normal to have questions about your treatment. And you have a right to know what is happening to you. This information can help you learn more about dialysis. Learning all you can about dialysis can help you take an active role in your treatment.

### Common questions about hemodialysis

#### Why do I need so many treatments, and why do they last so long?

It is easy to understand why a person would get tired of dialysis. It is time-consuming and interferes with your life. It can be boring to sit for hours having hemodialysis. But it is important to think about what is happening during your treatments.

Hemodialysis is doing the work your kidneys are no longer able to do. Normal kidneys work 24 hours a day to filter wastes and excess fluid from your blood. Hemodialysis has to do this same work (or as much as it can) in a much shorter time—usually 3 to 5 hours every other day. When you think about it, that is not a lot of time to do such a difficult job.

#### Can I skip a hemodialysis session?

You need to have **all** your dialysis sessions. This is the only way to get the right amount of



dialysis. If you do not have all your treatments, your health will suffer. You could end up in the hospital or not live as long as you might have. Follow your schedule so you can feel your best.

#### Can I shorten my hemodialysis session?

It can be tempting to try to shorten your sessions, but you must not. Your doctor has carefully checked your blood to see how well dialysis is working. The length of your sessions is based on these tests. People who get their full treatments are healthier and live longer. Work closely with your dialysis team so you can be one of these people.

### Common questions about peritoneal dialysis

#### Why do I need to do so many peritoneal exchanges?

Peritoneal dialysis is doing the work your kidneys are no longer able to do. Normal

kidneys work 24 hours a day to filter wastes and excess fluid from your blood. In somewhat the same way, peritoneal dialysis is doing its work around the clock. But it cannot do the job as well as healthy kidneys do.

Your doctor has calculated the right dose of dialysis for you based on your test results. Getting the right dose as often as your doctor prescribes is the best way to make sure you stay as healthy as possible.

### **Can I skip a day of peritoneal dialysis? Can I skip an exchange?**

The great thing about peritoneal dialysis is

that you are in charge of your own care. The problem is that, since it is all up to you, it is easier to miss a day or skip an exchange. It is so important to do all your exchanges. Skipping exchanges increases the chance that you will have to go to the hospital. It also increases your risk of dying. Follow your schedule faithfully so you can have the best health possible.

**Do you have any questions or concerns after reading this information?** It's a good idea to write them down and take them to your next doctor visit.



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