

SpeakUP™



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**Dialysis:
Five ways to
be active in
your care at
the hospital**

Dialysis: Five ways to be active in your care at the hospital is supported by

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The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.

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Photo courtesy of the National Kidney Foundation

As a dialysis patient, you have a routine. You go to a dialysis center for dialysis or perform your own dialysis at home. You are actively involved in the daily care of your condition. This should not change when you go to the hospital. You will need to work closely with your hospital caregivers to get the best care. Speak up and let your caregivers know exactly what you need.

Before you go to the hospital

- Talk to your kidney doctor and your dialysis care team. Ask them to send a rounding sheet to the hospital. The rounding sheet provides details about your dialysis.
- Take the name and phone number of your dialysis center with you to the hospital.
- Find out which hospitals in your area perform dialysis. If you perform your own dialysis, make sure the hospital has trained staff to help with peritoneal dialysis.
- Tell your family your wishes for life support. Ask the dialysis social worker what forms you need to fill out to make your wishes known. Take the forms with you to the hospital. Ask that a copy be put in your chart.
- Ask a family member or friend to be your advocate while you are in the hospital. An advocate can ask questions that you may not think about or be able to ask.

Here are five things you can do to be active in your care while you are in the hospital.

1. Find out how your dialysis will be managed

Your regular dialysis care team should talk with your doctors, nurses and other caregivers in the hospital about how your dialysis will be managed.

- ❑ Do not be afraid to remind everyone that you are a dialysis patient.
- ❑ Always wear a medical ID that alerts people that you are on dialysis. You may need to take it off for treatment or a test. Remember to put it back on.
- ❑ Write down questions to ask your doctors and nurses.
- ❑ Discuss any concerns about your dialysis while you are in the hospital with your regular kidney doctor.
- ❑ Keep a log of your blood pressure results. Discuss the results with your doctor.
- ❑ Know your usual hemoglobin level. Ask your doctor what will happen if your hemoglobin is low.
- ❑ Tell caregivers immediately if something does not seem right. They need to know if you have headaches, chest pain, shortness of breath or swelling.
- ❑ Ask a lot of questions if you have dialysis in the hospital. How will they perform dialysis? When will it be scheduled? Will it affect your condition? They should follow the same routine as your dialysis center, unless your condition changes, such as fluid in your lungs.
- ❑ If you perform your own dialysis, find out if you can continue to do it yourself in the hospital. If not, ask how it will be done.

2. Avoid infection and protect your access

Your access is your lifeline. Guard your access site from infection and misuse.

- ❑ Watch to see that caregivers wash their hands. Do not be afraid to speak up if they do not.
- ❑ Ask visitors to wash their hands. Wash your own hands.
- ❑ Do not be afraid to remind caregivers to wear clean gloves and a mask when they are working near your access.
- ❑ Clean your access site every day. If you cannot do this, your nurse can do it for you. Help the nurse by explaining how you clean it.
- ❑ Do not let anyone use your access for anything other than dialysis. It may look like a good vein to use for an IV or an injection, but this can destroy your access.
- ❑ Do not let anyone take your blood pressure on your access arm.
- ❑ If you have a temporary catheter, you must use a protective cover when you take a shower. Ask your nurse for one.
- ❑ Tell your nurse immediately if the access area is sore, swollen, red or feels hot. This could be a sign of infection.
- ❑ If you feel a staff member is not taking the right precautions, politely share your concerns with the head nurse or supervisor.

In addition, make sure you get a flu shot every year and that your pneumonia shot is current.

3. Know what will happen with your diet

Your diet is very important to your health, even more so when you are in the hospital. Eating the right foods and drinking the right amount of liquids will help you recover more quickly.

- ❑ Ask to speak to the hospital dietitian. Find out what you will be eating and drinking. Discuss substitutes for foods you are allergic to or dislike.
- ❑ If you take phosphate binders every time you eat, ask your nurse to bring these medicines with your food. Do not eat if you do not have your phosphate binders.
- ❑ Know what blood tests are being done. It is important to know what your lab results are for calcium, phosphorus and protein. These can be affected by what you eat.
- ❑ Some peritoneal dialysis patients may be switched to hemodialysis. Ask the dietitian how this will change what you eat and drink.

4. Ask what will happen with your medicines

People on dialysis can be affected by new medicines. Speak up if you have had allergies to medicines or other problems with medicines in the past.

- ❑ Give your doctor a list of your medicines or take your medicines with you to the hospital. Include prescriptions, over-the-counter and herbal medicines. List the medicine names, doses and the time you usually take them.
- ❑ Ask if the medicine schedule you follow at home will be the same in the hospital.
- ❑ Make sure your kidney doctor and your doctor in the hospital talk to each other about the timing of your medicines with your dialysis. Many medicines are removed or affected by dialysis.
- ❑ Ask questions about medicines you are given. What are the medicines? Why do you need them? How should they be given? Are they being given as directed? Are you being given the correct dose for someone on dialysis?
- ❑ Speak up if a medicine looks different than the one you usually take.
- ❑ Keep a log of the medicines you are given in the hospital.

5. Before leaving the hospital, find out what will happen when you go home

- ❑ Ask your doctor about your follow-up care. Make sure that you and your advocate understand the instructions.
- ❑ Let the staff at your dialysis center know when you will be leaving the hospital.
- ❑ Ask that your discharge orders, lists of medicines and the summary of your care be sent to your dialysis center. This should include test results and blood cultures.
- ❑ Find out when you can resume your regular dialysis treatments.
- ❑ Let the staff at your dialysis center know if there are any changes in your wishes for life support.

Also find out:

- ❑ The signs and symptoms that would cause you to call the doctor.
- ❑ When you should see your doctors for follow-up care.
- ❑ How long it will take your wound to heal, if you have one. Healing can take longer for people on dialysis.
- ❑ If there are any additions or changes to your medicine list and why. Be sure to follow the list when you go home.
- ❑ What treatments for kidney failure you will need to continue after leaving the hospital, if you started hemodialysis in the hospital. Ask about treatment options so you can make the right choices for you.
- ❑ When you can go back to your normal exercise, medicines and diet.