

My Life: Traveling with Dialysis

Taking a break from your daily routine can help you let go of stress. Looking forward to a trip can keep you going and it can help take your mind off everyday problems. Traveling while on dialysis is possible, it just takes some planning. There are several important steps to take before you leave to enjoy your trip. Traveling to other locations in the United States is not hard. After trying it the first time, it will not be as scary as you might have thought.

Steps to Take If I Do In-center Dialysis

1. Talk with your doctor first to make sure you are healthy enough to travel.
2. Start planning early, at least 6-8 weeks before your trip. You may need more time to plan for popular vacation spots or for travel during the holidays.
3. Be flexible about the dates and times for treatment, since some clinics may be full or be busier than others.
4. Give the clinic you are visiting plenty of time to prepare for your visit. A month ahead of time is best.
5. Talk with your care team for assistance and ask who helps arrange dialysis treatments away from home (this is called transient dialysis). Often it is the social worker, but someone else may be the “travel coordinator” at your clinic.
6. Find a clinic. Doing your own research can help the travel coordinator get you set up for transient treatment quickly.
 - If visiting friends or family, ask if they know of a clinic close by.

- Use a website. There are a few websites that can help you find the nearest clinic. Each website lets you search by clinic name, city, state or zip code within 10-100 miles from your destination. If you use a website, print out any information you find to give to the travel coordinator. Some of these include:
 - Dialysis Facility Compare: www.medicare.gov/DialysisFacilityCompare. For more information see the “Dialysis Facility Compare” page in the MY NETWORK section of the MY KIDNEY KIT.
 - Dialysisfinder.com: www.dialysisfinder.com or call 1-866-889-6019. It has dialysis clinics for travel in the United States and across the world.
 - The Nephron Information Center | Dialysis Units: www.dialysisunits.com. This site lets you narrow your search by the types of dialysis treatments the clinic provides.
7. Your travel coordinator can best help you if you give them:
 - The dates that you will be out of town
 - Where you will be staying
 - The number of treatments you will need while away (talk with your nurse to figure out how many treatments you will need)
 - Name and address of clinics that you might use in the city you are visiting
 8. Once you get to your destination, contact the clinic you are visiting to double check the time of your treatment.

What Else Should I Know or Do to Prepare?

Paying for Dialysis

- Medicare covers treatments in the United States only and Part B only pays 80% of the treatment cost.
- Call your insurance company to make sure they will cover dialysis away from home.
- Medicaid will not cover dialysis out-of-state because it is a state run program.
- If your dialysis is not covered, find out what the cost will be. You may be able to set up a payment plan.

Medical Information

- Carry your doctor's phone number, your dialysis prescription, list of your medications and other medical conditions with you.
- Take a printed copy with you of the medical information sent to the clinic you are visiting as backup.
- Pack your medications in a carry-on bag. Never pack medications in your suitcase just in case it does not arrive with you.
- Take the clinic phone number, address and name of the contact person at the clinic you are visiting.

Flying

- TSA Cares is a help line to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. TSA recommends that passengers call 72 hours ahead of travel for information about what to expect during screening. Call toll-free at 1-855-787-2227.

Cruises

- Going on a cruise is still a possibility for you. You have two options.
 - Choose a cruise that offers dialysis on board.
 - Receive dialysis at the port(s) where the ship stops.

- Here are a couple websites that have more information about dialysis cruises: www.dialysisatsea.com or www.dialysiswhilecruising.com. Call a travel agent for more information.

More Information for Home Patients

- Tell your care team if you are going to be gone for more than 1-2 days or if you are flying.
- Patients on peritoneal dialysis and home hemodialysis should have a back-up clinic.
 - Contact your clinic nurse so they can help coordinate with the back-up clinic.
- Contact your dialysis supply company 4-8 weeks before your trip. They may be able to ship your supplies to where you will be staying if you are going to be away for a long time.
- Home dialysis machines that are 100 lbs or less with the case can be carried onto airplanes. The machine is an “assistive device” and the airline must let you bring the machine on the plane or check it. The machine does not count toward a carry-on bag limit and they cannot charge a checked baggage fee. For more information visit: www.homedialysis.org.

Special thanks to Jeff Walser for sharing his advice and information from years of travel on dialysis. Jeff is a PAC, NPR and LAN member from Iowa.

My Questions

Ask your Care Team:

- Who is the person I should talk to about traveling?
- How much time do I need to plan ahead?
- Do I have to set up dialysis somewhere else if I'm just going for a few days?