

My Treatment: How Can I Stay Infection Free?

As a dialysis patient you have a higher risk of getting a healthcare-associated infection. Infections in the blood are the second leading cause of death among hemodialysis patients. Knowing common signs and what you can do to prevent infections can help you stay infection free.



Why Am I at a Higher Risk for Infection?

- The catheters and needles used for dialysis go into your bloodstream
- People on dialysis may have more hospital stays and surgeries
- Kidney disease lowers your body's ability to fight infection

Tips to Keep Me Infection Free



Wash your hands. Before and after dialysis; before and after changing bandages; after touching clinic surfaces; after using the restroom.



Speak up. It is ok to ask caregivers to wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers before and after caring for you.



Follow the steps. Watch the steps your caregivers use to care for you. Ask questions when and if something is different.



Know the signs. Watch for any signs of infection and tell your caregivers when you notice something as soon as possible.

Common Signs of Infection



Fever



Nausea



Vomiting



Loss of appetite



Pain

Signs of Infection at Your Needle or Catheter Site

- Skin is sore and tender to touch
- Swelling
- Skin is red
- Skin is warm to the touch
- Drainage from the site

Tips for Good Hand Washing

One of the most important things you can do to stay healthy is to wash your hands. Follow these steps to good handwashing:



1. Wet hands



2. Soap



3. Wash for 20 seconds



4. Rinse



5. Dry



6. Turn off with paper towel

1. Wet your hands with warm water.
2. Use liquid soap if possible. Apply a nickel- or quarter-sized amount of soap to your hands.
3. Wash for at least 20 seconds. Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather and then rub all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers and the area around and under the fingernails.
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands using a paper towel if possible.
6. Turn off water with paper towel and then use it to open the door if needed.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/dialysis>

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Keeping My Dialysis Access Infection Free

There are several types of “access” that are used to do dialysis. Whether you get hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, it’s important to know how to keep it healthy. Below are a few ideas to keep each kind of access healthy.

Hemodialysis Catheter

Know the steps your care team takes to prepare to use your catheter for dialysis.

- Do not get your catheter wet.
- Do not pull or tug on the catheter.

Fistula or Graft

- Know the steps your care team takes to use your fistula or graft for dialysis.
- Wash your needle site before dialysis.
- Do not scratch or pick at your fistula or graft.
- Know what to do if you have any problems with your fistula or graft.
- Read “MY CHOICES: What I Should Know About Fistulas” for more on signs and symptoms of infection.

Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) Catheter

- If your care team tells you to, keep a special dressing over the skin around your catheter.
- Use soap and a clean washcloth to clean your peritoneal catheter site every day after your care team tells you it is ok.
- Check your catheter daily for signs of cracking, drainage, redness or swelling and tell your care team if you see any.
- Tape the catheter down to your skin to keep from tugging or pulling on it.

My Questions

Ask Your Care Team:

- Should I use anti-bacterial soap?
- What is the clinic policy for infection control?
- When do I take off bandages or dressings?

