

Understanding Dialysis

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What is dialysis?

Kidneys remove waste products and extra fluid from the bloodstream. For people with late-stage kidney disease, dialysis helps clean the blood through a filtration process and remove excess fluid from the body.

Forms of dialysis

There are two main types of dialysis:

- Peritoneal dialysis – uses a membrane in the body (peritoneal membrane) as a natural filter within the body.
- Hemodialysis – uses an artificial filter outside the body.

Both types:

- Filter waste from the blood and remove excess fluids from the body.
- Must be completed on a regular basis.
- Allow continued work and travel.
- Have pluses and minuses.
- Have more than one treatment type.

Choosing the right form of dialysis for you

Talk to your kidney doctor (nephrologist) and the other members of your care team to choose the best form of dialysis for you. Many people choose the form of dialysis based on what best fits their lifestyle.

Peritoneal Dialysis (PD)

- Completed by patients at home.
- Involves fewer restrictions on food choices and amount of fluid intake than hemodialysis.
- Uses fluid exchange to mimic the natural function of the kidneys.
- Uses catheter permanently placed in your belly (abdomen).
- Results in fewer problems with anemia than hemodialysis.
- Not recommended for people with scarring or leaks in the abdominal wall, or people with certain inflammatory conditions like Crohn’s disease or IBS (irritable bowel syndrome).
- Involves needle-free treatments.
- Is done several times a day or overnight.
- Is most common form of home-based dialysis.



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Peritoneal Dialysis (PD)

- Includes: continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) and continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD).
- Sometimes causes mild back pain or abdominal fullness during treatment.

Hemodialysis (HD)

- Usually completed at a dialysis center or hospital, but can also be done at home.
- Uses a man-made filter called a dialyzer to replace lost kidney function.
- Is done several times a week on a fixed schedule.
- Can be done overnight.
- Includes: in-center hemodialysis, home hemodialysis (HHD), daily home hemodialysis, nighttime (nocturnal) hemodialysis.
- Sometimes causes fatigue on treatment days.