

Focus On

Infection Control for Dialysis Patients

Living Healthy. Living Well.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I want to decrease my risk of exposure to infections when I am at dialysis?
- Do I want to protect my vascular access from infection?
- Do I want to know how my dialysis caregivers use infection control to protect me?
- Do I want to know what CMS (Medicare) requires of me to prevent transmission of bloodborne pathogens in the dialysis unit?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above questions,

READ ON!

Dialysis patients are at increased risk of contracting infections, including bloodborne diseases, because there is an increased risk of exposure to blood in the dialysis unit. Dialysis patients are in close contact with other patients who may be sick or who may be carriers of disease. Bloodborne diseases can be transmitted from one patient to another if inadequate precautions are not used. Bloodborne pathogens (germs) can cause very serious illnesses and even death, if not treated quickly.

Many dialysis patients have diabetes or other conditions which may affect their ability to fight off infections. Some patients and staff may carry bacteria that can cause disease in their nose and mouth, even though they are not sick.

Fact: Handwashing is the #1 method of preventing the transmission of diseases.



How do the dialysis staff use infection control to protect me?

- Washing their hands or using alcohol hand sanitizer in between any patient care procedures or working with the dialysis machines or equipment.
- Wearing gloves and changing them in between any and all patient contact helps to prevent possible transmission to another patient.
- Wearing a mask protects your vascular access (fistula, graft, or catheter) from getting pathogens (germs) into your blood system, which can cause a very serious illness called bacteremia.
- Staff also wear gloves, gowns and eye protection to protect themselves from being exposed to blood.
- Your dialysis chair and machine are cleaned with a bleach solution to remove any blood from them in between patient treatments.
- The dialysis machines are disinfected daily.
- Blood is cleaned up promptly from chairs, machines, and the floor with bleach.

How can you protect yourself from infection in the dialysis unit?

- If you have a catheter, wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth, when your dialysis treatment is started and ended.
- Wash your access with soap and water after your needle sites have clotted off before the bandaids are applied.
- Let the staff know if you are sick, we may ask you to wear a mask if you are coughing, and the Dr. may order an antibiotic for you.
- Take the annual flu vaccine when it is offered. It is required for all dialysis patients to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Pneumonia vaccine is recommended every 5 years for dialysis patients. Ask if your vaccines are up to date.

Medicare (CMS) requires that all dialysis patients do the following:

- Always wash your hands or use the alcohol hand sanitizer before coming into the dialysis unit and after holding your needle sites before you leave the unit. You can spread your blood to other patients when you touch things as you leave the unit.
- Wash your access with soap and water or have the staff do it before the needles are placed.
- Always wear a glove when holding your access site.

Please take a moment to answer these True/False questions with your Primary Nurse.

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Dialysis patients are at risk of contracting bloodborne diseases. | True | False |
| 2. Patients and staff may carry bacteria in their nose and mouth, even though they are not sick. | True | False |
| 3. Handwashing does not help to prevent the transmission of disease. | True | False |
| 4. Dialysis staff should wear a mask over their nose and mouth to protect your vascular access. | True | False |
| 5. Dialysis patients do not need to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. | True | False |
| 6. I don't need to wear a glove to hold my needle sites because it is my own blood I am touching. | True | False |