

News from the NHSN Help Desk

Part 1: What is the purpose of the 21 Day Rule?

Data quality and ensuring that dialysis event data in NHSN are meaningful for infection prevention is a foremost priority. Learn more about the basics of the 21 day rule and why it is an essential part of reporting dialysis events to NHSN.

What is the 21 day rule?

The 21 day rule is a reporting rule to reduce over-reporting of dialysis events that are likely to be related to the same patient problem. It states that 21 or more days must exist between two dialysis events of the *same* type for the second occurrence to be reported as a separate dialysis event. If fewer than 21 days have passed since the last reported event of the same type, the subsequent event of the same type is NOT considered a new dialysis event and therefore, it is not reported.

The 21 day rule applies across calendar months and is applied differently to each dialysis event type.

To learn more details about the 21 day rule and its application, read the [Dialysis Event Surveillance Protocol](#) and take the [2016 online Dialysis Event Surveillance training](#).

How critical is it to report dialysis events according to the 21 day rule in NHSN?

Reporting dialysis events in accordance with the 21 day rule is VITAL!

If you do not report according to the 21 day rule, you will over-report dialysis events. Not only does over-reporting distort both facility and national aggregate event rates, but it can cause facilities to focus their infection prevention resources inappropriately and ineffectively. Finally, over-reporting may inflate a facility's bloodstream infection (BSI) standardized infection ratio (SIR), which can have a negative impact on their CMS ESRD Quality Incentive Program (QIP) score.

Stay tuned for the next edition of the Monthly Newsblast in April 2016 to understand the specifics of applying the 21 day rule to each dialysis event type.



Questions about NHSN? Contact us at nhsn@cdc.gov with "Dialysis" in the subject line and we will respond to your inquiry within 5 business days.