

Conversation Starter

to Prevent Infections in Dialysis Patients

Preventing infections is important for patient safety. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wants dialysis patients and dialysis centers to start a conversation about preventing infections. Family members can also start the conversation. We hope this guide can be a starting point to improve awareness about patient safety issues.



How does this facility involve patients and their families in infection control activities? Are patients encouraged to speak up when they see a concerning practice (for example, a staff member who does not wash her hands)?

Dialysis centers should educate and empower patients to help prevent infections and support a safe care environment. Talk to your social worker or facility administrator for ideas on how you can get involved.

How does this facility make sure that all patients receive necessary vaccines to prevent illness (such as Hepatitis B, seasonal flu, and pneumococcal vaccines)?

Patients on dialysis have weakened immune systems and should get certain vaccines to keep from getting sick.



How does this facility make sure that dialysis center staff are vaccinated against the flu every year?

Sick staff members can spread the flu to patients. Requiring dialysis center staff to get vaccinated each year can help prevent this spread. Dialysis centers should also have policies that support staff to stay home when they are sick.

Does this facility check all patients for hepatitis C infection?

All hemodialysis patients should be tested for hepatitis C when they start treatment at a center, and then every 6 months if they could become infected. Testing is the only way to know if patients have hepatitis C and to find out if the infection is spreading in the facility.



Does this facility prepare medications in a separate room away from dialysis stations to avoid contamination?

Medications for injection should be prepared away from patient treatment areas to keep them safe from germs. One way to do this is to prepare them in a separate room. More information about injection safety can be found at: www.oneandonlycampaign.org/



Does this facility use the CDC recommendations to help prevent infections?

Regular use of CDC resources and recommendations can keep patients from getting serious infections. These recommendations include monitoring staff hand hygiene and vascular access care, training staff, and assisting patients in learning about these practices. Facilities should be using these recommendations and giving their staff feedback to know how they are doing.

More information can be found at: www.cdc.gov/dialysis/prevention-tools

How does this facility handle cleaning dialysis stations in between patient treatments – specifically, are dialysis stations cleaned while a patient is still in the chair?

Dialysis stations need proper cleaning to prevent spread of germs between patients. CDC has steps for facilities to follow to make sure every station is safe for the next patient. Some steps should not start until the patient has completed their dialysis treatment and left the station.

More information can be found at: www.cdc.gov/dialysis/prevention-tools



Does this facility use a new, disposable dialyzer (artificial kidney) with each dialysis treatment? If not, can a patient opt out of reusing the dialyzer?

Reused dialyzers must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use, and mistakes can occur. Talk to your doctor about whether you could use a disposable dialyzer instead of a reused one.

How does this facility support patients to use a fistula instead of a catheter as early in their treatment as possible?

Sometimes it is medically necessary to use a catheter for dialysis. However, catheters can lead to serious infections and other problems. Fistulas and grafts are safer for most patients. Talk to your care team about what is right for you.

More information can be found at: www.aakp.org/store/item/understanding-your-hemodialysis-access-options.html



If there was an outbreak in this facility how would the facility communicate with patients? How would the facility partner with others such as the health department?

Contagious germs can spread through dialysis centers. Finding an outbreak (a sudden increase in numbers of sick persons) early and alerting public health can help to stop the spread of infection.

