

# Unit Haemodialysis

Kidney failure causes waste products and fluid to eventually build to dangerous levels in the body – different treatments help to remove these and to reduce symptoms of kidney failure.

## What is unit haemodialysis?

- Your blood is transported outside the body through an artificial kidney dialysis machine that removes waste products and excess fluid from your body.
- You will attend a dialysis unit three times a week for 4 hours at a time – in the morning or the afternoon and either Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday.
- Nurses manage the dialysis unit but patients are encouraged to take an active part in their treatment if they wish and with time many patients then choose to do the haemodialysis at home.
- Transport can be provided to take you to and from dialysis if needed.
- You need a small operation to create a fistula – linking a small artery and vein under the skin of your arm – or to insert a plastic tube in a vein for dialysis.
- The fistula has needles put in it each dialysis session – with time some patients learn to do this for themselves.
- You can go on holiday, in the UK or around the world but need to book holiday dialysis – unfortunately you cannot have a holiday from the haemodialysis itself.
- You are likely to have restrictions on how much fluid you can drink and the types of food you eat.
- You have 4 dialysis free days a week.

## Health benefits and survival

- Unit haemodialysis is generally not as gentle on the body as peritoneal dialysis or home haemodialysis which can be done for longer periods of time.
- How long someone lives on dialysis depends on lots of factors like age, other health conditions and whether someone is fit enough for a kidney transplant later.

## Quality of life benefits

- You attend dialysis in an allocated timeslot three times a week and so there is routine but much less flexibility compared to the dialysis treatments at home.
- You can rely on nursing staff to ensure you receive your treatment safely and don't need to store anything in your home.

## Am I suitable for any alternatives to unit haemodialysis?

- Peritoneal dialysis (*PD*) is a treatment ideal for patients who are starting dialysis for the first time, or waiting for a kidney transplant and it is all done in your own home.
- Home haemodialysis avoids time-consuming journeys to the dialysis unit and gives you more flexibility and control over when you have dialysis.
- There is a dedicated team to support you to learn to do PD and home haemodialysis and keep you well.
- Some patients who may have other health problems or are struggling to manage with day to day activities come to a decision with their medical team that they would prefer not to have any sort of dialysis treatment.

## What happens next if I am interested in unit haemodialysis?

- You will continue to attend regular clinic appointments where you can discuss your treatment options while blood tests and symptoms are monitored.
- You will be invited to the dialysis access clinic where you will meet an access surgeon to discuss about making a fistula.
- You will be given information about the operation to make a fistula, and about keeping well on haemodialysis.
- Once the fistula is made, it is assessed by nurses and scanned in clinic.
- Not all fistula operations are successful and sometimes further attempts are needed. If you reach a point where you need dialysis before a fistula is ready, a plastic tube – a permcath – can be inserted into a vein under the skin to allow you to have haemodialysis.
- When you develop symptoms of kidney failure and near needing to start dialysis, your allocated specialist nurse will support you and explain to you the steps involved in starting your first treatments.

## Comments

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## Important Telephone Numbers

Chronic Kidney Disease Team: 029 218 45854

(Mon to Fri 8-4pm)

## Chronic Kidney Disease CNS

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