



END STAGE RENAL DISEASE NETWORK OF TEXAS

Questions for Patients to ask a Prospective Clinic

Clinic – Choice of Clinic & Scheduling Treatments

- Do I have to get my treatments at the dialysis clinic that my doctor recommends?
- What time do I have to be at the clinic for my treatment?
- Does the clinic have scheduled start times for treatments? Or are start times first come – first serve?
- If I arrive at the scheduled time, how long will I usually have to wait to start my treatment?
- Can I choose my dialysis shift, or are dialysis shifts assigned to me?
- If I want to work or go to school, can I request the shift that works best for my schedule?
- If the dialysis shift that I want is not available, can I be put on a waiting list for that shift?

Questions about Cost:

- What will my out-of-pocket costs be at the clinic?
- Will the clinic charge me for things that aren't covered by Medicare, insurance or other financial aid?

Transportation:

- Does the clinic provide transportation?
- Do I have to pay for parking?
- Is the clinic close to public transportation like a bus line or train station?

Personal Touch:

- Can I visit the dialysis unit and talk to other patients?
- Is there a patient from the clinic that I can meet with or call on the phone?
- Are there support groups for patients and families at the clinic?
- If there are support groups, how often, when and where do they meet?

Clinic Rules:

- Can I eat and drink a) in the waiting room and b) in the dialysis treatment area?
- Can I have visitors?
- Are there rules about when visitors can be in the treatment room?
- Can someone (for example, a family member or pastor) sit with me during my dialysis treatment?

Facility Services:

- How far is the doctor's office from the clinic?
- Do I have to bring my own sheet, blanket and pillow?
- Will I have my own TV?
- Does the clinic provide headphones for TV and radio to decrease the noise?

- What is the clinic's dialysis schedule during holidays (Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, etc.)?
- How long will the clinic hold my chair (on the same shift) if I go on vacation or have to go in the hospital?
- Does the clinic provide free coffee in the waiting room?
- Is there someone who speaks the same language as me (or as the patient)?
- Does the clinic have a patient newsletter?
- Does the clinic have a patient representative or mediator?
- What transplant clinics are the patients sent to?
- Does the clinic provide training for patients who want to learn home hemodialysis?
- What area of the city is the clinic located in?
- What are the closest major cross streets to the clinic?
- Does the clinic have a place to store my belongings during my dialysis treatments?
- Does the clinic have a security guard?
- Does the clinic have an exercise program?
- Does the clinic have chair exercise bicycles?
- What kind of patient education does the clinic offer (when someone first starts and over time)?
- Who reviews patients' monthly lab work with them?
- Do you have an emergency generator?
- What hospital does your ambulance service go to?
- Are phone numbers to obtain outside assistance posted?
- What days/shifts is the dialysis unit open for dialysis treatments?

Facility Procedures:

- Does the clinic re-use dialyzers?
- What's the clinic's average number of re-uses per dialyzer?
- How do clinic staff hold fistula/graft sites after dialysis? (i.e., clamps, patients hold own, staff)
- If I (or the patient) can't hold sites is there enough staff to help hold sites?
- Does the clinic "deaden" or numb the skin before the dialysis needles are put in?
- If they do "deaden" or numb the skin what do they use (Lidocaine, EMLA cream, etc.)?

Questions About Staffing and the Treatment Team:

- Does everyone on your staff speak fluent English?
- How, how long and where are new staff members trained?
- How often does the doctor see the patients while they are on dialysis?
- Will I see the same doctor all the time during dialysis or do other doctors share making rounds at my clinic?
- Does the clinic have a nurse practitioner that helps the doctor?
- Does the clinic have a physician's assistant who helps the doctor?
- How many registered nurses work at the clinic?
- What is the ratio of registered nurses to patients?

4040 McEwen Road, Suite 350, Dallas, Texas 75244

Phone: 972-503-3215 | Fax: 972-503-3219 | info@nw14.esrd.net | www.esrdnetwork.org

Supporting Quality Care

- How long has the nurse in charge been working at the clinic?
- Is the charge nurse for the shift assigned patients to take care of?
- How many LVN's/LPN's work at the clinic?
- On an average shift, how many patients is each staff member responsible for?
- Does the ratio of caregivers to patients change during breaks and lunches?
- How many full-time and/or part-time social workers work at the clinic?
- What is the ratio of social workers to patients?
- How often does the social worker visit patients in the dialysis clinic?
- Does the social worker at the clinic have office hours for appointments before/after treatments?
- What role does the clinic take in helping me make travel plans at other dialysis centers?
- How many full-time and/or part-time dietitians work at the clinic?
- What is the ratio of dietitians to patients?
- How often does the dietitian visit patients in the dialysis clinic?
- Does the dietitian at the clinic have office hours for appointments before/after treatments?

Equipment and Maintenance Questions:

- How old are the clinic's dialysis machines?
- How often do the dialysis machines receive preventative maintenance?
- How old are the clinic's dialysis chairs?
- When is the last time the clinic's water system was inspected by water experts or state surveyors?
- When was the last time the entire clinic was surveyed by state surveyors?
- Did they find any deficiencies (problems) during the survey? If so, what were the deficiencies?
- What has the clinic done to fix these deficiencies (problems)?

Transient Dialysis Treatments:

- Does the clinic take transient dialysis patients?
- Do transient dialysis patients have to pay the 20% not paid by Medicare up front?
- Are transient dialysis patients charged any extra fees by the transient clinic to cover administrative costs?
- Do transient dialysis patients have to be seen by the doctor at the transient clinic before they can receive dialysis treatments at the transient clinic?
- Does the clinic have transient patient chairs open during in November and December over the holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years)?
- Does the clinic have transient patient chairs open during the summer vacation months?

More About the Clinic:

- Has the clinic won any awards for its care of patients? If so, from whom?
- How many complaints did the clinic get from your patients during the last year?
- What were the complaints?
- How did the clinic handle these complaints?

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Supporting Quality Care

- How many people from the clinic die every month?
- Does the clinic have an isolation room?
- How many patients at the clinic have fistulas?
- How many patients have catheters?

During a Clinic Tour – Look for These Things:

- Cleanliness of clinic – waiting room, bathrooms, treatment area
- Noise in treatment area
- Attitude of patients to other patients
- Attitude of staff to patients
- Attitude of patients to staff
- Attitude of staff to other staff
- How crowded the clinic is
- Size of waiting room
- Patient education materials in the waiting room
- Meet the Head Nurse (or Director of Nursing)
- Talk to a patient