



When Someone You Know Starts Dialysis

A GUIDE FOR CARE PARTNERS

WHAT TO EXPECT

Dialysis helps the body remove water and waste from a person's blood when their kidneys stop working. Starting dialysis is a big step.

Most people need dialysis three days a week for several hours each time to do what the kidneys would do if they were working well.

You will meet new members of the care team who will answer questions about the dialysis process and the dialysis equipment and provide you and the patient with support throughout treatments.

TELL A NURSE RIGHT AWAY IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

You may be the first person to notice these changes:

- Confusion
- Swelling of legs, ankles, or face
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Drainage or redness from the access site or port
- Mood changes that seem to cause distress, like being scared or anxious.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP



HELP:

Help the care team understand what matters most to the person you are supporting. Ask the care team how you can help the patient stay as active as possible.



SUPPORT:

Support the patient's unique needs by helping to take notes or encouraging them to follow diet and fluid restrictions.



SCHEDULE:

Reinforce the importance of following the dialysis schedule and attending treatments.



PROVIDE:

Create opportunities to talk about questions, thoughts, feelings, and fears with you and the care team.



BRING:

Ask the care team what personal or comfort items can be brought to treatment sessions.



TALK:

Talk about family, friends, and familiar topics or read a favorite book or newspaper out loud.

INTERACTING WITH THE CARE TEAM

The dialysis care team includes a nephrologist (kidney specialist), nurses, social workers, dietitians, and other staff. The care team will:

- Monitor dialysis treatments
- Review medicines, including vitamins and supplements
- Review and discuss which foods to eat and which to avoid
- Review goals for hydration or fluid intake

If you notice anything unusual or if you have questions, please talk with a member of the care team.

For more information on kidney disease and support, visit [kidney.org](https://www.kidney.org), or scan the QR code below.

