

Questions to Ask When Considering a Home Dialysis Therapy



Starting dialysis can be overwhelming. If you know ahead of time that you will need dialysis or if you need to start dialysis treatment immediately, it is never too late to talk to your healthcare team about your treatment options. Use this sheet to start the conversation with your healthcare team about your dialysis options.



What should you do when you learn you need to start dialysis?

You and your care team will talk about your treatment options. Most people can choose from: in-center hemodialysis (ICHD), home hemodialysis (HHD), or peritoneal dialysis (PD). Selecting the treatment option that best fits your lifestyle can help you stay happy and healthy.

What are the different types of dialysis treatments?

ICHD filters and cleans a patient's blood using a dialysis machine. ICHD is done at a dialysis center. The patient receives treatment at a dialysis center at least three days per week. The treatment can last 3–5 hours and is supervised by trained healthcare professionals.

HHD filters and cleans a patient's blood using a smaller, portable machine. The patient does the treatment at home, and it can be done during the day or night.

PD is also a treatment for kidney failure. This therapy takes place in the stomach area. A tube is inserted into the stomach and through a series of fluid exchanges, extra fluid and waste is removed through the tube. PD is a nonstop therapy and can be done by hand during the day or with the use of aycler machine at night.

How long does home dialysis training take?

The length of the training can depend on the type of machine you use. Training can take between 3–8 weeks.

How will I feel after home treatment?

Home dialysis patients dialyze more often than in-center patients so less waste and extra fluid builds up in their bloodstream between treatments. For this reason, they have more energy after their treatments.

What if I need help during treatment? Will I be able to contact someone for help?

Most home dialysis programs recommend patients have a care partner to assist them during treatment. However, there are patients who have permission from their doctor to perform home treatment without a partner. If the patient needs medical assistance, there is a nurse hotline open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How much space in my home will I need to store my home dialysis treatment supplies?

The amount of space you need for supplies depends on the treatment. A closet-sized space is typically needed for supplies. In general, boxes take up more room. So, remove supplies from the boxes and store them in drawers or on shelves. Drawers with wheels will help you move supplies easier. And if you notice that supplies are taking over your space, you can order less supplies more frequently.

Can I still lift weights as a home dialysis patients?

A limited weight-lifting program can help increase blood flow, build muscle, and help you become stronger. However, PD patients may be advised by their healthcare team not to lift weights because it may cause a hernia or a pericatheter leakage.

How will a home therapy affect my sex life?

Some patients experience lower sex drives due to kidney disease, however it may improve after starting dialysis. Medication treatments may be appropriate for some people who struggle with sexual performance. Talk to your kidney doctor about what may work for you.

Will people be able to see my PD catheter underneath my shirt?

Most people will not be able to tell that you have a catheter in your tummy. The PD catheter tube can be taped to your stomach or placed in a PD catheter belt. A PD catheter belt is worn under your clothes and designed to be placed in a built-in pocket.

Can you travel when you're on dialysis?

Dialysis patients may also travel. If you are dialyzing at an in-center clinic, your social worker may need to arrange dialysis treatments in advance so that you can receive treatment once you reach your destination. HDD and PD treatments do not usually require advanced arrangements. Home dialysis patients have more flexibility in their treatment schedule to arrange dialysis around their travel.

What if my kidney doctor does not recommend a home therapy for me? Can I get a second opinion?

Yes, you are the most important person on your healthcare team. If your kidney doctor does not recommend you for home therapy, contact your ESRD Network to help you find a doctor that will support your choice. You can also visit the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Dialysis Facility Compare website, www.medicare.gov/care-compare/?providerType=DialysisFacility, for home dialysis providers in your area.

What if I do not like home dialysis, can I go to in-center dialysis?

Most patients who are on a home therapy enjoys the freedom of home treatment. However, if you want to move to an in-center treatment, your care team can help you.

If you have additional questions about home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, talk to your healthcare team. You can also ask your care team to introduce you to a patient who is currently doing a home treatment to get a patient perspective on the treatment.



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