



Tips for Staying Healthy Outside of the Dialysis Clinic

The information in this handout was gathered by patients to help patients remain healthy outside the dialysis clinic.

What Do My Lab Results Mean?

Lab results give your healthcare team information about your treatment plan—what’s working and what needs improvement. Your doctors, dietitian, and other healthcare team members will review the results with you and make recommendations to adjust your medication and/or diet to improve your treatment plan. Results that your healthcare team will monitor include:



- **Blood pressure** measures the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels. High blood pressure happens when the pressure increases enough to cause damage.
- **Fluid intake** must be limited. If too much fluid builds up, it can cause swelling. It can increase your blood pressure, which makes your heart work harder. Too much fluid can build up in the lungs, making it difficult to breathe.
- **Protein-low levels** may be an indication of poor appetite or low-protein food choices. Low levels of protein may cause a patient to have a difficult time fighting off infections.
- **Iron** makes red blood cells. Iron is an important part of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin carries oxygen to the body.
- **Potassium** is found in almost all foods. Too much potassium in the diet can cause heart problems.
- **Phosphorus** is found in almost all foods. A high level of phosphorus can cause bones to weaken and the skin to itch.
- **Calcium** builds strong bones and teeth. The calcium level can be low with kidney disease. Your doctor may prescribe calcium supplements.
- **Blood urea nitrogen (BUN)** can detect elevated waste levels in the bloodstream, which is an early sign of reduced kidney function.
- **Blood counts:**
 - Hematocrit measures the number and the size of red blood cells. It is used to check for low red blood cells (called anemia).
 - Hemoglobin is part of the red blood cell that carries oxygen to the cells of the body. It is also used to check for anemia.
- **spKt/V (single-pool Kt/V):** This result is used to see if the person is getting enough dialysis. It measures the amount of waste products removed during treatment. It will determine how many hours the dialysis treatment will be.

Ask your healthcare team to explain your lab results in more detail. Also, ask for a copy of the lab results.

Eat a Kidney-Friendly Diet

ESRD patients should eat a protein-rich diet and stay away from foods high in phosphorus and potassium, like bananas and potatoes. The dietitian at your dialysis facility can help you understand food labels and the proper diet right for you. Use your cell phone’s QR Code reader to connect to a kidney-friendly grocery store food list.



Exercise

Most dialysis patients can exercise. Exercise increases your energy level, reduces cholesterol levels, and helps control your blood sugar and blood pressure. It is very common for people with kidney disease to lose the muscle in their bodies. Exercise can keep your muscles from shrinking. You can get back the muscles that you lost if you exercise regularly. Before you start an exercise program, talk to your doctor.



3000 Bayport Drive, Suite 300, Tampa, FL 33607 | 844.472.4250 | 813.354.1514 fax | www.esrdncc.org

This material was prepared by the End Stage Renal Disease National Coordinating Center (ESRD NCC) contractor under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. FL-ESRD NCC-7N5TA2-06092020-02

