

As a kidney patient, what else should I know?

Kidney patients have a harder time fighting infections. They also have more chances of being around germs in healthcare settings.

TIP: If you see signs of infection, take action and alert your kidney care team. Spotting an infection early can help you avoid serious problems with your health.



For more information, visit www.esrdncc.org.
For additional infection prevention resources, visit www.cdc.gov



www.esrdncc.org

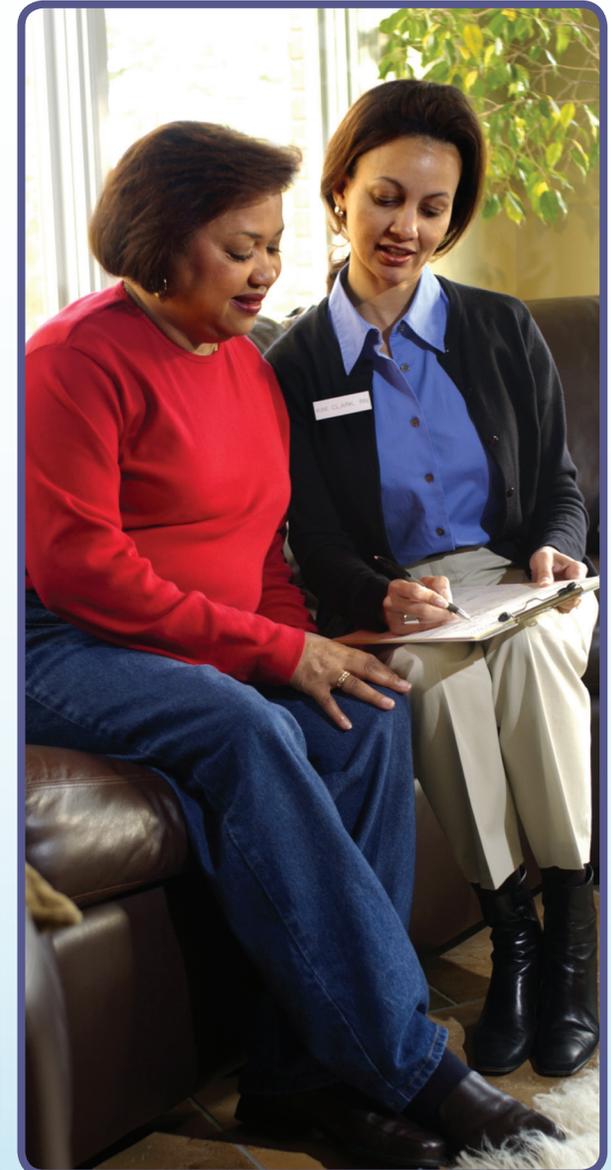
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Know the Facts About Infection



What are germs and why do they cause infections?

Germs are tiny organisms, or living things, that can cause disease. Since germs are everywhere, they can get into your body in many ways. You can get a germ through physical contact or through the air, depending on the type of germ. Members of your care team may call these germs bacteria, virus, or fungus.

If a germ gets into your body in a place it isn't supposed to be, it can grow and cause you to have signs or symptoms of an infection. When this happens, your body will try to protect you. An infection is your body's response to fighting against the germs that have gotten into areas of your body where they are not supposed to be.

Why is it important for kidney patients to know about infections?

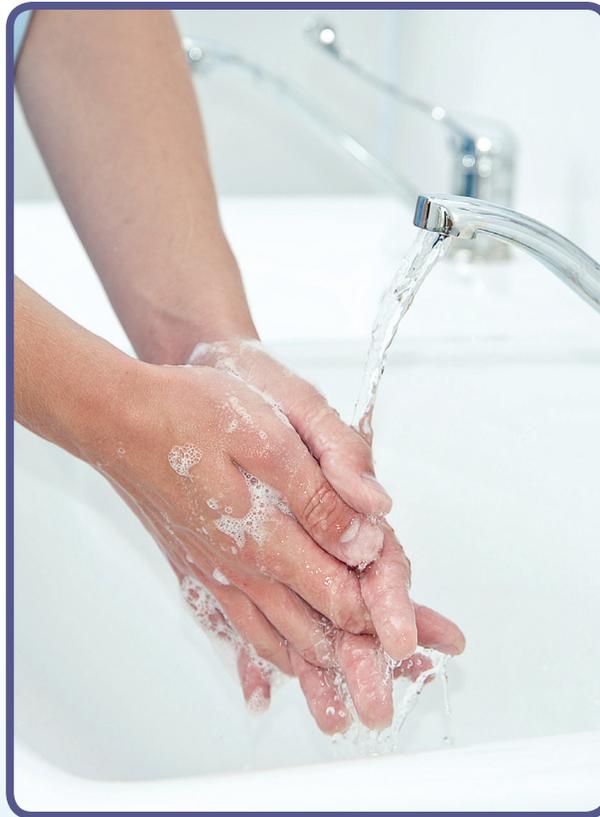
Fighting an infection takes energy and strength from your body. Depending on where the infection is, it can be harder for the body to fight off. Infections drain your body's resources and make you feel bad. Also, since you have kidney disease, your body's defenses may already be weak. This will make it harder for your body to fight the infection.

How does my body protect me from germs?

Your body has cells that are made to fight germs. If a germ is somewhere it should not be, your body will send those cells to fight the germ.

What happens when my body is fighting germs?

You can develop many different signs or symptoms when your body is fighting germs. For example, a germ in your nose and lungs can cause you to cough and have a stuffy nose; a germ under your skin can create a red, swollen, sore area.



If you have an infection, you might notice:

- Skin around your access may be red and warm,
- A persistent cough with fever (temperature two to three degrees above normal),
- Skin bumps or boils,
- You're just "not feeling right,"
- Elevated blood sugar, if you have diabetes.

What can I do to protect myself?

There are many ways to protect yourself from getting or giving others an infection. Some of the simple ways you may already know:

- Frequently clean your hands with soaps and solutions that kill germs,
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing,
- Use soap to frequently wash common surfaces in your home, like the kitchen counter.

TIP: Remember to keep yourself as healthy as possible; a healthy, well-rested body is better able to fight infections. Don't forget to keep your fistula or graft site clean and to receive regular immunizations.