

Understanding How Dialysis Makes Me Feel, and How You Can Help

Dialysis is a medical treatment that does some of the things that healthy kidneys usually perform. The treatment can be performed at a dialysis center, or it can be performed at home. During the treatment, the patient is connected to a dialysis machine. The machine removes blood from the body, cleans it, and returns the clean blood back to the body. This process can take 3 to 5 hours. And it's done at least 3 times a week.

The treatment can leave the patient very tired. The patient may need to rest or may need help doing things that he/she normally would not have trouble doing. If you are a caregiver, family member, or friend to someone who receives dialysis treatment, here are some ways you can support the dialysis patient.

How I Feel After Dialysis Treatment

How You Can Help

I feel tired after treatment.



Let me sleep. It may be for an hour. It may be for 3 hours. My body needs time to recover.

I have an upset stomach, or I want to vomit.



Allow me to lay down. Offer me crackers or sip of Ginger Ale.

My skin itches.



Remind me to keep my skin moisturized. I may also need help finding foods with less phosphorus.

I'm hungry.



Help me make food to eat.

I don't feel like eating.



Make sure I eat something. Offer me a small snack instead of a big meal.

My mouth is dry.



Offer me a hard candy, frozen grapes, a lemon to suck on, or mouth wash to soothe my mouth. Don't give me water.

I feel dizzy or have blurred vision.



Let me sit down for 15–30 minutes.

My muscles are cramping.



Help me talk to my dialysis team about my treatment plan.

I feel overwhelmed.



Suggest listening to music, writing down my feelings, taking a hot bath, or going for a walk.

My blood pressure dropped.



Help me talk to my dialysis team about my treatment plan.

My body shakes.



Let me lay down when I get home and cover up with a blanket.

I feel moody.



Give me some time to be by myself. Don't keep asking if something is wrong.



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