



# Reducing Hospitalizations, Readmissions, and Emergency Room Visits



## Overview

This module provides guidance in supporting peer mentees in avoiding hospitalizations, hospital readmissions, and emergency room visits.

People with end stage renal disease (ESRD) have a greater risk of comorbidities, including diabetes and anemia, and have higher hospital admission rates than patients with other diseases.<sup>1</sup>

People receiving hemodialysis are hospitalized, on average, two times per year, and over 35 percent of these patients are re-hospitalized within 30 days of discharge. Those who skip at least one or more dialysis sessions per month, or shorten at least one treatment per month, have a significantly higher risk for increased short-term, fluid-related, hospitalizations and a 25 percent higher risk for mortality.<sup>2</sup>



Some common causes of hospitalizations are heart disease, infections, and dialysis access complications. When people understand the possible causes of hospitalization, they can take an active part in staying healthy and out of the hospital and emergency room.

As a peer mentor, you can help improve mentees' knowledge of infections, the importance of coming to dialysis treatments, and proper care of their dialysis access.

## Reducing Hospitalizations

Here are some tips that mentors can share with mentees that might help prevent hospitalizations.

- Always wash or sanitize your hands before touching the fistula or graft.
- Follow all instructions about how to care for your access.
- Ask your kidney doctor about replacing the catheter with a permanent access.
- Report fever, chills, diarrhea, and/or redness and swelling around a catheter or fistula site to the dialysis nurse.
- Report any open or oozing sore or wounds to your primary care doctor or dialysis nurse.
- Get vaccinated annually for influenza and ask about other vaccinations you might need.
- Attend all treatments and call the dialysis facility to reschedule if you are not able to attend a treatment or will arrive later than your scheduled time.
- Stay for the entire dialysis treatment as prescribed by your doctor.
- Recommend the mentee talk with the dietitian about:
  - Fluid management.
  - Salt and potassium restrictions.
  - Weight loss.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9408097/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bmcnephrol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12882-022-02701-1#Fig>

## Prevent Returning to the Hospital

It is important to follow all discharge instructions. Follow up with your kidney or primary care doctor after being discharged from the hospital. This can be especially important to prevent a going back to the hospital. Here are some tips Mentors can share with Mentees:

- Mentors should not ask for information about the hospital stay, but should encourage the mentee to inform the dialysis facility of any procedures or changes that occurred during the hospitalization, for example:
  - Received a blood transfusion
  - Received antibiotics
  - Had surgery
  - Changes in dry weight
  - Changes in dialysis prescription i.e., increase in treatment hours, change in the dialysate bath
  - Changes in medications. Bring in the list for the nurse to review and update the medical record
- Bring the discharge summary and any other medical records to your follow up appointment
- Talk with your social worker if you need transportation services to appointments

## Preventing Emergency Room Visits

Many hospital emergency rooms are not always familiar with persons with kidney failure and their needs. There may be other options for patients to use.

- Talk with your kidney doctor or dialysis nurse for recommendations when to visit the emergency room.
- Call your dialysis facility for things such as:
  - Signs of infection in the catheter or vascular access
  - Cloudy peritoneal dialysis fluid
  - Flu-like symptoms

## Additional Resources

- [Where Should You Go for Medical Care](#)
- [10 Steps You Can Take to Avoid Unnecessary Hospitalizations](#)