

# 10 Steps You Can Take to Avoid Unnecessary Hospitalizations



Not every hospitalization can or should be avoided. There are times when a hospitalization is necessary. Listen to your care team and know when to go. However, who wants to go to the hospital if it can be avoided—no one, of course! The following are steps **you** can take to protect yourself against the need for an unnecessary hospitalization.

Action	How
<b>1</b> Prevent Blood Infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands before touching your fistula or graft<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Wash the skin over your fistula or graft with warm, soapy water just prior to your dialysis treatment</li></ul></li><li>• Learn the infection prevention practices in your facility</li><li>• Know the signs and symptoms of infection:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Fever, fatigue, diarrhea, and/or redness and swelling around a catheter or fistula site</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>2</b> Protect Your Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen to your access for a whooshing sound</li><li>• Feel your access for a buzzing feeling (thrill)</li><li>• Talk to facility staff about your access at each treatment</li><li>• Get treatment as soon as an issue is identified</li></ul>
<b>3</b> Reduce Your Risk of Fluid-Related Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend all of your dialysis treatments</li><li>• Follow salt and fluid intake guidelines</li><li>• Let staff know if your thirst increases between treatments<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Drinking too much fluid between treatments makes the fluid harder to remove</li><li>– Too much fluid may cause shortness of breath and/or heart problems</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>4</b> Protect Your Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep a healthy body weight</li><li>• Get help to quit any smoking habit</li><li>• Take your blood pressure medicine as ordered</li><li>• Follow salt and fluid intake rules</li></ul>
<b>5</b> Address Digestive Problems Before They Become Serious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk with facility staff about dietary concerns</li><li>• Let facility staff know about symptoms you may be having so they can be addressed before they require a hospitalization</li><li>• See your gastroenterologist (stomach doctor) on a regular basis</li></ul>

Action	How
<p><b>6</b>      <b>Prevent Blood Pressure Problems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your blood pressure medicine as prescribed</li> <li>• Know your current dry weight</li> <li>• Tell the care team of any changes that could affect your dry weight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extreme thirst, loss of appetite, or increased appetite with body weight gain</li> <li>– Removing too little fluid can increase blood pressure</li> <li>– Removing too much fluid can cause your blood pressure to drop</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>7</b>      <b>Ensure Your Medicines and Doses Are Correct</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring in a list of ALL of your current medications or your medicine bottles to discuss with facility staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Tell them if there is anything new or different about your list</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tell your nurse or social worker if you cannot get your medicines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do this right away!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b>      <b>Track Your Hemoglobin (Hgb) Levels</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know your Hgb lab test results</li> <li>• Ask facility staff if your Hgb is out of target range (10–13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low hemoglobin can leave you feeling weak and tired, and short of breath</li> <li>– High hemoglobin can pose serious health risks even though you may not feel differently</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Report any signs of trouble, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Infection, open sores or wounds, or change in the color of your stool</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>9</b>      <b>Avoid Falls at Home</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your care team if you are feeling weak or overly tired <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– They may be able to help you find services or options to assist you</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you have a fall at home, tell your care team right away!</li> </ul>
<p><b>10</b>      <b>Prevent Pneumonia</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the flu vaccination every year</li> <li>• Get a pneumonia vaccination if you have not had one in the last five years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ask your care team for more information</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As about other vaccinations or immunizations that might help you stay out of the hospital</li> </ul>

