









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.



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 nor imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. FL-ESRD NCC-NC2PFE-03132023-03

