

Dialysis

What is it?

Your kidneys filter the blood in your body. They remove waste products that could harm your vital organs over time. When there are problems with your kidneys, the blood is no longer filtered properly and this can affect your health. Dialysis helps by filtering the blood for you.

Without a kidney transplant, you will need to have dialysis for the rest of your life. However, the goal is to help you have as normal and active a life as possible.

What will my GP do now?

Dialysis is managed mainly by your kidney specialist and your renal team. Your GP also has an important role in your ongoing care including:

- Coordinating various care providers
- Providing you with access to other health resources, such as dietitians

Your GP can also help you manage complications of your dialysis, such as:

- Helping with infections and catheter problems
- Managing any other health problems and medications
- Helping you apply for carer payments, housing and disability parking

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP's role is to continue to take care of any other health problems, related or unrelated to your dialysis. They may also monitor/test your:

- Blood pressure and temperature
- Weight, and signs of swelling
- Breathing rate and depth

Your GP will also complete regular health check-ups, such as heart health, vaccinations and cancer screening.

What can I do?

The goal of dialysis is for you to keep living as normal and active a life as possible. You are more likely to achieve that if you:

- **Keep appointments** – with your GP, specialist and other healthcare providers
- **Do daily activities that keep you connected** – see friends and family, work, volunteer and travel
- **Stay active** – regular exercise as directed by your healthcare team
- **Eat a healthy diet** – as directed by your healthcare team
- **Take your medication as prescribed** – speak to your GP if you have any questions about your medication.

Types of dialysis

Haemodialysis

Blood is pumped out of your body, cleaned and returned using a machine

Peritoneal dialysis

A fluid called dialysate is washed in and out of your belly in cycles

The type of dialysis that is right for you will depend on how you live your life, and where you live

When should I contact my GP?

Contact your GP if you have had any of these symptoms: fever, shortness of breath, especially on exertion or laying down, pain or swelling at fistula or catheter exit, vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

What supports are available?

South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) runs specialist renal clinics at Liverpool, Bankstown, Campbelltown and Fairfield hospitals. The renal healthcare teams work in many ways to help you manage dialysis, including:

- **Pre-Dialysis Clinic Service** – education about treatment options
- **Access Clinic** – fistula/catheter insertion assessment and preparation and follow-up
- **Dialysis Units** – the dialysis units run Monday to Saturday
- **Home Therapies Units** – supports home-based dialysis
- **Clinical Psychology** – providing mental healthcare support for people with chronic kidney disease
- **Supportive Care** – for help managing issues that affect your quality of life
- **Social Work** – help with mental health and social welfare
- **Dietetics** – nutrition support and education

Speak to your GP about a referral to an SWSLHD renal clinic or contact the clinic on **8738 3718**.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How can I best cope living with dialysis?*
- How can I stay healthy while I'm on dialysis?*
- Can I still travel while I'm on dialysis?*
- What symptoms should I look out for?*
- What activities should I avoid?*



Where can I find more information?

Kidney Health Australia offers information and support about managing dialysis. For a range of resources, visit the website kidney.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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