

Kidney (Renal) Failure and Dialysis

Kidney Failure

Kidney (renal) failure happens when your kidneys can no longer get rid of waste products and fluid through the urine. Injury, disease or drugs may cause kidney failure, which always needs treatment.

Kidney failure often goes unnoticed in the beginning. Symptoms may include high blood pressure, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, less than normal urine output and skin that looks yellowish-brown. There is no cure, but one treatment option is kidney dialysis.

Kidney Dialysis

During dialysis, waste and fluid are taken out of your blood by an artificial kidney machine. Blood is filtered through the machine and put back into your body.

The dialysis process begins when a healthcare provider puts an access (either artificial or natural) in a vein or artery. The access helps carry blood from your body to the machine, which cleans it.

The blood then returns to your body through another part of the access. This process is usually not painful. The entire process can take 2 to 4 hours.

Types of Accesses

There are different types of tubes your doctor may use to create an access:

- **Quinton catheter:** a temporary device put into your vein either below the collarbone or in the groin. This is used for short-term dialysis only while you are in the hospital.
- **Perm-catheter:** a tunneled device put in your vein below the collarbone. This is used for dialysis until a graft or fistula is ready to use.
- **A-V fistula:** a joining of an artery and vein in the forearm or upper arm
- **Brescia fistula:** a joining of an artery and vein in the forearm
- **Gortex® graft:** an artificial device usually put in the forearm during surgery.

Possible Complications (Problems)

- **Clotting of the access.** The doctor will need to de-clot the access at a clinic or hospital. (This is not an emergency.)
- **Infection in the opening where the access goes into your arm.** To prevent infection, a sterile bandage will stay over the site. You will learn how to clean the site.

- Bleeding of any access. Put direct pressure on the site for 5 to 10 minutes.

If the bleeding doesn't stop, call your dialysis center or clinic. You may be directed to go to an Emergency Department or Urgent Care.

- Drop in blood pressure. Because of the excess fluids being taken out of your body, you may have low blood pressure (hypotension). Symptoms include dizziness, ringing in your ears and nausea (upset stomach). The nurse will help control these symptoms, adjust the controls on the artificial kidney or both.

Your primary care provider will answer any of your questions or concerns.

Keep All Appointments

- Keep all dialysis appointments, even if you feel well.
- If you need to miss an appointment, talk with your primary care provider first.