



Taking charge of your kidney disease



Beginning dialysis? Start here.

Definitions, conversation starters, and resources for you



Talking with your dialysis care team

You may have a lot of questions for your doctor, nurse, dietitian, or other people helping you stay healthy while on dialysis. The questions below can help you start a conversation—but feel free to add your own.



- What is hemodialysis?*
- What is peritoneal dialysis?*
- How long will I have to be on dialysis?*
- Why do I have to attend dialysis 3 times a week?*
- Will my kidneys improve so I can come off dialysis?*
- Why am I so tired after dialysis?*
- What do the mineral and hormone levels you measure in my blood (eg, phosphorus, albumin, potassium, calcium, and parathyroid hormone [PTH]) mean?*
- How do I figure out how much phosphorus is in different foods and beverages?*
- Which foods are best for staying healthy on dialysis?*
- Why do I have to take so many medications? What are they for?*
- Why do I have to take phosphate binders when I eat?*
- When will I feel better?*
- _____ ?
- _____ ?
- _____ ?





Terms to know for dialysis patients

These are some of the words you may hear in the dialysis clinic. Ask your healthcare provider to explain any terms you do not understand.

Anemia:

A condition in which the body cannot deliver enough oxygen to organs and tissues as a result of having fewer or less-healthy red blood cells. People with anemia may be tired and pale or may feel their heartbeat change.

Dialysis:

The process of cleaning waste from the blood artificially. The kidneys normally do this job, but if they aren't working, the blood must be cleaned with special equipment. The 2 major forms of dialysis are hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

Diet:

Diet is an important part of managing your kidney disease. Foods that are high in certain vitamins and minerals may be harmful to your overall health. Talk with your doctor or renal dietitian about which foods are right for you.

Lab values:

Monitoring your lab values is an important part of staying healthy. Talk with your doctor about what your lab value ranges should be and what you can do to maintain them.

Albumin: _____

Calcium: _____

Phosphorus: _____

Potassium: _____

PTH: _____

Nutritional supplements: Along with eating right, supplements may be required to help people on dialysis maintain weight and overall health.

Phosphate binder: A medication that lowers phosphorus levels in the blood by removing it from the foods you eat. It is used to treat high levels of phosphorus in the blood in chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients on dialysis.

Renal care team: A group of dialysis specialists, including a nephrologist (kidney doctor), nurse, registered dietitian, and other healthcare professionals (social workers, technicians), who are focused on your health.

Renal vitamins: Most people on dialysis need to take vitamins including vitamin B, folic acid, and vitamin C. Talk to your doctor or renal dietitian to learn which renal vitamins are right for you.

Vascular access: Before you start dialysis, a surgeon will prepare a site in your arm or leg where the blood can safely flow in and out of your body during the dialysis treatment. This site is called the vascular access. While on dialysis you will likely need to have a *permanent access*, so that it can be used at each dialysis session.

Vitamin D: May be in an “active” or supplemental form. People on dialysis may need the “active” form to stay healthy; your doctor or renal dietitian will work with you to determine if you need this vitamin.

My notes and questions:

CKD Word Jumble

Use your new CKD knowledge to unscramble the words below.

- 1 SALCRUVA CAESCS (2 words)
- 2 INEAMA
- 3 ANERL IMTSVINA (2 words)
- 4 ETID
- 5 BLA VEUSAL (2 words)
- 6 HOSPTPEAH ENDBIR (2 words)
- 7 ITAVNIM D (2 words)
- 8 AENLR ACRE AETM (3 words)
- 9 SADILSIY
- 10 LNUOTNIRTIA PSTPELENSMU (2 words)

Answer key:

1. Vascular access
2. Anemia
3. Renal vitamins
4. Diet
5. Lab values
6. Phosphate binder
7. Vitamin D
8. Renal care team
9. Dialysis
10. Nutritional supplements