

Home Hemodialysis ...

Is a life saving treatment...

that can offer significant advantages for certain patients...

but it can have serious risks that patients and their caregivers must understand in order to be as safe as possible.



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Additional Resources:

American Association of Kidney Patients
www.aakp.org

Home Dialysis Central
www.homedialysis.org

National Kidney Foundation
www.kidney.org

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Home Medical Devices

Home Hemodialysis Safety:

A Patient Guide



What You Need To Know About Home Hemodialysis Safety

If you have been told by your physician that you can have your hemodialysis treatments in your home, this can be very good news. You will no longer have to travel to a dialysis clinic to undergo your treatments, and this can give you more control over how treatments affect your life. But undergoing hemodialysis in the home does have some risks. It is important to understand these risks to help you and your caregivers operate your equipment as safely as possible.

How Does Home Hemodialysis Treatment Work?

Machines used for home dialysis function similar to those in the dialysis clinic. Most patients will have either an internal fistula or graft that provides access to their blood. Home hemodialysis machines connect to these access points and draw blood from your veins and pump it through a blood filter called a dialyzer, where it is exposed to a fluid called dialysate. The dialysate removes metabolic waste from your blood. The machine then returns the cleansed blood to your body.

What Are The Risks?

The most serious risks of hemodialysis are blood loss or the leaking of air into the blood

stream (air embolism). These are primarily caused by complete or partial disconnection of the hemodialysis machine's blood lines. Depending on how or where a disconnection occurs, blood can be pumped or leak out of the tubing or air can be drawn into your blood.

Hemodialysis machines are designed to detect disconnections by monitoring the pressure in the blood lines, but these monitors have limitations. Your safety requires vigilance by you and your caregivers or assistants to minimize risk. Information about these and other risks is typically described in the user manual for your equipment and supplies.

What Can I Do To Keep Myself Safe?

While blood loss, air embolism, and other risks can be serious, there are things you can do to help ensure your safety.

- During training, pay particular attention to instructions about connecting and disconnecting blood lines. Read and understand the user manual for the equipment and the supplies you will be using.
- Make sure you use only supplies that are recommended by your health care provider or equipment manufacturer.
- Have a caregiver or assistant who has been trained in how to conduct home hemodialysis

be present throughout every one of your treatments.

- Be sure that blood line connections are securely connected before beginning treatment.
- Make sure that blood line connections are always visible for inspection, and are not covered by sheets, blankets, or tape.
- Make sure that the machine's alarm volumes are never turned down to inaudible levels, and never adjust alarm pressure limits out of the proper range in an attempt to reduce the number of alarms.
- You and your caregiver or assistant should respond to alarms promptly and try to determine their cause.
- Most hemodialysis machines have monitors that will clamp the line and stop pumping if air is detected, since air in the line can quickly lead to a dangerous air embolism. If this happens, stop treatment and immediately contact your dialysis professional or physician for guidance.
- Post the phone numbers and other contact information for your dialysis professional and physician in a readily accessible location. Contact them with any questions or concerns about your treatment.