

Preparing for Emergencies: A Guide for People on Dialysis



Dear Medicare Beneficiary:

This guide gives you facts about what to do in case of an emergency that leaves you without power or water. Knowing how to be ready in case of an emergency is very important.

Use this guide to help you get prepared. This booklet guides you through the information you should have ready, provides lists of supplies to have on hand to prepare for emergencies, and provides helpful ideas on how to manage until conditions return to normal.

Preparing for Emergencies provides important information to help keep you healthy.

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Preparing for Emergencies: **A Guide for People on Dialysis**

The Health Care Financing Administration

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Why Prepare for Emergencies?

Across the United States and around the world, natural disasters and severe weather remain among the unpredictable parts of life. Emergencies often strike quickly, and without warning.

People relying on regular dialysis are particularly vulnerable, being entirely dependent on power and water for treatment. These utilities may be down for several days. In emergency situations of great magnitude, telephones may not work, and roads and bridges may be impassable. Patients may not be able to get to their clinics.

Emergency rooms may be crowded, and hospitals burdened with the seriously injured. People on dialysis cannot assume that they will be accepted for timely dialysis treatments.

What will happen during an emergency?

Possibly nothing. However, you may be without many services, such as telephones, running water and electricity. You may or may not be able to communicate with your doctor. You may have to rely on foods that require little or no cooking. Foods stored in your refrigerator or freezer will stay fresh for several days if you open your appliances only for meal preparation. It is best to eat foods stored in your refrigerator before using shelf-stored foods.

How do I prepare myself for an emergency situation?

Knowing how to be ready in case of emergencies can prolong your life. This guide provides lists on what to have at home to prepare for emergencies. In addition, it provides helpful ideas on how to manage until conditions return to normal.

The steps recommended in this guide are:

- Record your medical history
- List emergency phone numbers
- Get a medical emblem
- Keep medicine, food, and supplies on hand
- Have an emergency box at home with everything you might need
- Pack a “fanny pack” to carry with you if you travel
- Know what to do during emergencies.

Important note:

This guide has broad tips on how to prepare for an emergency if you have permanent kidney failure (end stage renal disease). These tips will NOT work for every patient or in every emergency situation. You may have special health problems or face unique conditions that make a different answer better for you.

You should always contact your own doctor for medical advice. Do **not** rely on this guide as a source of medical advice or treatment. If you require immediate medical attention, try first to contact your own doctor or dial 9-1-1 (where available).

Record Your Medical History

If you must go to a dialysis center or hospital other than your own, have your medical information available for your caregivers. This section allows you to record some of this information. Other ways you can be prepared are: keep important medical information up to date; document past treatments and operations; keep records of your insurance claims; carry your insurance card; stock a first aid kit; and remember your flu shots and check ups.

Please print the information clearly, and update it if any of the information changes. (Date updated _____)

Name _____
Last First

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Your nearest relative, or someone to be contacted in case of an emergency:

Name _____
Last First

Relationship to you _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Medicare claim number (from your red, white and blue Medicare card)

Insurance coverage and/or policy numbers _____

Primary ESRD diagnosis _____

Other medical conditions you are being treated for _____

Allergies or complications _____

Your usual type of treatment (check one)

Center hemodialysis

Home hemodialysis

Chronic ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD)

Chronic cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD)

Intermittent peritoneal dialysis (IPD)

The dialysis center where you usually get care is

Name of center _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Primary physician _____ Phone () _____

I also see the following doctors _____

Other medical notes (include operations and significant illnesses)

Other emergency telephone numbers _____

Local utilities _____

Record and Stock Your Medication

- Know what medications you are taking, their names, strength, and how often you take them (for example: Os-Cal 500, 4 times a day).
- Carry a list of these medications (amount, strength, frequency) with you at all times.
- Know which medications are absolutely necessary for your survival. Your doctor can help you learn this.
- Check with your doctor about having diuretics, sorbitol, and Kayexalate on hand. If you cannot get dialysis treatments as usual, potassium control is critical.
- Keep a 5-7 day emergency supply of all medications on hand at all times, or the amount recommended by your doctor. Refresh your medication supply every 2-3 months, and check expiration dates. If you use a mail service pharmacy, allow a little more time for processing and mailing back to you.
- If you travel, carry 2-3 days' supply of all medications in your hand-carried baggage and do not let it out of your sight. In emergencies, luggage may get lost or misplaced. Suggestion — keep the medicine in a “fanny pack” you can wear. That way, your hands are free, and your medicine is with you. Periodically check this medicine supply to make sure it has not expired.
- If you are on peritoneal dialysis, include in your emergency pack a 5-day supply of the antibiotic your doctor prescribes for peritonitis. Emergency environments may not be clean, and poor water, sanitation, dust, and crowding in shelters increases the risk of peritonitis.

- **Keep an extra pair of glasses with your emergency supplies.**
Glasses can be easily broken or lost in an emergency, and if your vision is bad, you will have a very hard time without them. Also, if you use eyedrops for eye conditions, include them in the emergency medicine supply.

My medications are:

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Name of medication: _____

Dosage: _____ Frequency: _____

Get and Wear a Medical Emblem

If you are injured or unable to communicate, medical workers need to know quickly that you are a person on dialysis or a transplant recipient.

A medical emblem is a symbol that represents medical need. The front of the bracelet or necklace has a symbol and the back has a primary diagnosis, such as “Diabetes,” and a phone number where someone can get more medical information.

How does it work?

Usually your emblem is custom engraved with your primary medical conditions, personal ID number and a 24-hour hotline number.

The emblem will alert medical personnel about your special status, even if phone lines are not working.

If needed, your computerized medical data are available within seconds to medical professionals, anywhere in the world. Your vital data can help medical personnel provide proper diagnosis and care — and could save your life.

How to get an emblem

In some areas, the cost of the first emblem is paid for by an outside organization, such as the National Kidney Foundation or the American Kidney Fund.

One well-known medical emblem system is the MedicAlert Foundation at 2323 Colorado Avenue, Turlock, CA 95382, 1-800-ID-ALERT.

Another is Body Guard, 111 East Parkway Drive, Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234, 1-609-646-4777. Check the phone book for others, or ask your nurse or social worker.

Where to wear your emblem

Your medical emblem can be worn as a bracelet or necklace and bears an internationally recognized symbol.

A necklace might be missed if your upper body clothes are rolled up.

A bracelet is easy to see, but should not be worn on the same side as your fistula. During a trauma, it could block the flow of blood if it is pulled up the arm.

Carry your medical information card

Wear your medical emblem and carry your medical information card with you at all times. Your medical information card has additional information that would be useful to your caregiver, such as medications and other information that does not fit on the emblem. This provides immediate information to emergency personnel and may reduce the need for phone calls to the emblem registry service.

Preparing for Emergencies

If you use center hemodialysis

Maintain a 2-week supply of canned foods and water. Replace the food every 6 months. (See page 20 for the list.) Ask the renal dietitian in your center to check that food items in the diet on pages 22-25 comply with your prescribed renal diet. Observe strict dietary restrictions for fluid, sodium, and potassium.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of all medications on hand at all times, or the amount of medication recommended by your doctor.

If you use a mail service pharmacy, have them send your medication a week in advance of your medication running out. Allow a little more time for processing and mailing back to you.

Maintain a supply of your medications at your work place.

Know where dialysis services are available in other locations.

If you use home hemodialysis

Wear a medical emblem and carry your medical information card with you at all times.

Keep a 2-week supply of canned foods and water; replace the food every 6 months. (See page 20 for the list.) Ask the renal dietitian in your center to check that food items in the diet on pages 22-25 comply with your prescribed renal diet. Observe strict dietary restrictions for fluid, sodium, and potassium.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of all medications on hand at all times, or the amount of medication recommended by your doctor.

If you use a mail service pharmacy, have them send your medication a week in advance of your medication running out. Allow a little more time for processing and mailing back to you.

Maintain a supply of your medications at your work place.

Register with the water and power companies and emergency service organizations in your area for special priority for restoration of services. Keep their phone numbers on file.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of hemodialysis supplies.

Be sure you have flashlights and batteries close at hand.

If you use Chronic Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD)

Wear a medical emblem and carry your medical information card with you at all times.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of all medications at all times, or the amount of medication recommended by your doctor.

If you use a mail service pharmacy, have them send your medication a week in advance of your medication running out. Allow a little more time for processing and mailing back to you.

Observe strict dietary restrictions for fluid, sodium, and potassium.

Keep a 2-week supply of canned foods and water, replacing it every 6 months.

Keep a supply of your medications at your work place.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of peritoneal supplies at home. Check expiration dates of peritoneal dialysis solution, and replace as needed or every 6 months.

If using an ultraviolet device, keep battery charged at all times. In case of loss of electrical power, the battery pack should last for 3 days.

If you use Continuous Cyclic Peritoneal Dialysis (CCPD)

Wear a medical emblem and carry your medical information card with you at all times.

Follow the above instructions for CAPD, AND:

Keep a gasoline-powered generator that makes 110 volt AC alternating current to keep your cycler working, or a 12 volt DC to 110 volt AC inverter (available at electronics stores), which will allow you to run your cycler off of the car cigarette lighter by connecting it to car electricity, while you car is on. If your car is in a garage, **be sure** there is plenty of fresh air and good ventilation.

Cross-train on manual CAPD.

In case of loss of electrical power, switch from CCPD to manual CAPD.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of CCPD and CAPD supplies at home.

Check expiration dates of peritoneal dialysis solution, and replace as needed or every 6 months.

Keep a 5-7 day supply of CAPD supplies at your work.

Additional Information for Special Medical Conditions

Diabetes

Keep a 5-7 day supply of your diabetic medication on hand. This includes syringes if you use insulin. Insulin is best stored in a refrigerator, but will keep at room temperature for up to a month. If you have no refrigeration, keep your insulin in the coolest area available to you — out of sunlight and away from extremes in temperature. Do not freeze insulin.

Keep extra batteries and strips for glucose meter, lancets, alcohol wipes, etc. in your emergency box.

Your food supply should include some high sugar content foods like hard candies in case you go “low” with too little sugar in your body.

Heart disease

Keep a 5-7 day supply of all blood pressure, heart or anti-clotting medications on hand.

Pack an Emergency Box

Use the shopping list on pages 19-20 to stock up on supplies and food. Pack an emergency box so that you have everything you need at hand. Review and restock it every 6 months.

- This guide
 - Food for 3-day emergency diet plan
 - Radio and extra batteries
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Candles and matches (do not use if you suspect a gas leak)
 - Plastic forks, spoons, knives, paper plates, bowls, and cups
 - Baby wipes/napkins
 - Can opener
 - 5-7 day supply of medication(s)
 - Sharp knife
 - Plastic jugs filled with water
 - First aid kit
 - Chewing gum
- Date last reviewed: _____

Pack a fanny pack if you travel

If you expect to travel during severe weather, or there are predictions of a natural disaster, pack a fanny pack with the emergency supplies you will need away from home.

Keep a supply of medications with you, as well as an extra pair of eyeglasses; a list of your medications and dosages; any important medical information as noted in this guide; and phone numbers of your dialysis facility, your doctors, and a close friend or relative. If you are a diabetic, include syringes, wipes, and candy. Include any other supplies you may want to have in an emergency.

Stock Up on Food

Emergencies often occur without warning, so it is a good idea to keep a food supply available and replace it regularly to guarantee freshness. Plan ahead. The shopping list in this booklet includes everything you need for the 3-day emergency diet plan.

Why do I need an emergency diet plan?

The emergency diet plan in this guide should be used when dialysis must be skipped or delayed. If you are on CAPD and cannot get to your supplies to do your exchanges, this plan will also apply to you.

This diet plan is not a substitute for dialysis. When dialysis is unavailable, your survival will depend on your ability to follow a limited diet. This information will help you prepare and manage an emergency diet plan. If you are able to communicate with your doctor at this time, he/she will be able to help you to manage.

The 3-Day Emergency Diet Plan

The diet plan was developed by the Northern California Council on Renal Nutrition. It is stricter than the renal diet you normally follow to keep poisons from building up in your blood.

The basis of this diet is 2 cups of fluid per 24 hours, and no fruits or vegetables. Below is a summary of the basic components of the plan:

Bread/cereal	5-6 servings per day
Fruits/vegetables	2-4 servings per day
Meat/protein	3 ounces per day
Milk	½ cup per day
Fats	6 or more teaspoons per day
Sweets	as desired (except for diabetics)

The diet provides about 40 grams of protein, 1,500 mg. of sodium, and 1,500 mg. of potassium per day.

These meals can be stored and prepared with little or no refrigeration.

On the daily menus, you can switch different cereals, juices, and meats as long as they are on the shopping list.

1 egg or 1 ounce of meat that has been kept at a safe temperature can be switched for 2 Tbsp. of peanut butter or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt-free canned meat.

Shopping List

This shopping list contains everything you need for your travel pack, your emergency box, and the 3-day emergency diet plan.

Dry goods

- measuring cups, teaspoons and tablespoons, dropper
- plastic knives, spoons, forks
- 1 package of napkins
- 1 pack of paper plates
- 1 pack of plastic or styrofoam bowls
- paper towels
- 1 pack of plastic cups
- candles
- matches
- can opener
- baby wipes
- sharp knife
- batteries for radio and flashlights
- flashlight
- scissors
- garbage bags
- plastic jug for storing water
- 1 small bottle of household chlorine bleach
- piece of cloth or cheese cloth
- handkerchief
- strainer
- 5-7 day supply of medication(s)
- 5-day supply of antibiotics (if use peritoneal dialysis)
- 5-7 day supply syringes (if diabetic)
- extra pair eyeglasses
- first aid kit
- fanny pack you can wear (if you travel)
- radio (battery operated)

Food

- 2 packages of dry milk OR 3 - 8oz cans evaporated milk
- 1-2 gallons of distilled water
- 2 packages of powdered fruit-flavored drink mix OR 1 premade container
- 1 can soda pop
- 6-pack of 4oz cans of cranberry juice
- 6 boxes of single-serving cereal
- 1 small box white sugar or packets
- 12 - 4oz cans of fruit
(pears, plums, peaches, cherries, applesauce, pineapple)
- 1 - 8oz can of carrots
- 1 - 8oz can of green beans
- 1 - 8oz can of peas
- 4 - 4oz cans of unsalted meat
(tuna, crab, chicken, salmon, turkey)
- 1 jar peanut butter
- 1 small jar jelly or honey
- 3 small jars mayonnaise
- 1 loaf regular bread
(not salt- free, which contains no preservatives)
- 1 box vanilla wafers OR graham crackers
- 5 packages of candy
(sour balls, hard candy, jelly beans, or mints)
- 1 package marshmallows
- 1 jumbo pack of chewing gum

Emergency Instructions

Here's what to do when an emergency is happening. Keep a copy of these instructions in a noticeable spot, like your refrigerator door or kitchen cabinet.

EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Stay at home, unless you are hurt.
- 2.** Begin survival diet:
2 cups fluid per 24 hours, no fresh fruit or vegetables.
See pages 22-25 in this guide for detailed diet instructions.
- 3.** Wait **at home** for instructions and details about dialysis on TV, radio, messenger, or phone. Depending on the nature of the emergency, you might try to contact your doctor, as he/she may be able to help you manage this emergency.
- 4.** If you must go to a shelter, tell the person in charge about your special needs.

Remember: Hospitals may not be equipped to provide maintenance dialysis treatments.

3-Day Emergency Diet Plan

NOTE: Diabetics should avoid sweets in this plan

Day One

Breakfast: Cereal and fruit

½ cup milk or mix ¼ cup evaporated milk with ¼ cup distilled water from sealed containers or disinfected water

1 box of cereal (single-serving)

1 Tbsp. sugar

½ can canned peaches (drained)

Morning Snack

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1½ squares)

Sourballs (10)

Lunch: Peanut butter and jelly sandwich

2 slices of bread

2 Tbsp. peanut butter

2 Tbsp. jelly

½ cup canned pears (drained)

4 oz. (½ cup) premade powdered fruit drink

Afternoon Snack

Marshmallows (10)

½ cup canned applesauce

Dinner: Chicken sandwich

2 slices bread

½ can (2 oz.) unsalted, canned chicken*

2 Tbsp. mayonnaise*

½ cup canned carrots (drained)
½ cup cranberry juice

Evening Snack

Jelly beans (10)

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1½ squares)

* Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not used within 4 hours.

Day Two

Breakfast: Cereal and fruit

½ cup milk or mix ¼ cup evaporated milk with ¼ cup water from sealed containers or disinfected water

1 box of cereal (single-serving)

1 Tbsp. sugar

½ can canned pears (drained)

Morning Snack

½ cup canned applesauce

Jelly beans (10)

Lunch: Turkey sandwich

2 slices of bread

¼ cup (1 oz.) unsalted, canned turkey*

1 Tbsp. mayonnaise*

½ cup pineapple (drained)

4 oz. (½ cup) of premade powdered fruit drink

Afternoon Snack

Mints (10)

½ cup canned applesauce

Dinner: Tuna sandwich

2 slices bread

½ can (2 oz.) unsalted, canned tuna*

2 Tbsp. mayonnaise*

½ cup canned peas (drained)

½ cup cranberry juice

Evening Snack

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1½ squares)

Sourballs (10)

* Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not used within 4 hours.

Day Three

Breakfast: Cereal and fruit

½ cup milk or mix ¼ cup evaporated milk with ¼ cup water from sealed containers or disinfected water

1 box of cereal (single-serving)

1 Tbsp. sugar

½ cup cherries (drained)

Morning Snack

Vanilla wafers (10) or graham crackers (1½ squares)

Hard candies (10)

Lunch: Peanut butter and jelly/honey sandwich

2 slices of bread

2 Tbsp. peanut butter

2 Tbsp. jelly or honey

½ cup canned peaches (drained)

4 oz. (½ cup) cranberry juice

Afternoon Snack

½ cup canned applesauce

Jelly beans (10)

Dinner: Salmon sandwich

2 slices bread

½ cup (2 oz.) unsalted, canned salmon*

1 Tbsp. mayonnaise*

½ cup canned green beans

½ cup soda pop

Evening Snack

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1½ squares)

Marshmallows (10)

* Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not used within 4 hours.

How to Disinfect Water

Keep distilled water on hand for drinking. If you run out of stored water, you may disinfect available water for drinking, brushing your teeth or for other uses. **Do not use disinfected water for dialysis.**

1. Before starting disinfection, first strain water through a clean cloth or handkerchief to remove any sediment, floating matter or glass.
2. Water may be disinfected with 5.25% sodium hypochlorite solution (household chlorine bleach). **Do not use products in which there are active ingredients other than hypochlorite.** Use the following proportions:

For clear waterBleach
One quart2 drops
One gallon8 drops
5 gallons $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon

For cloudy waterBleach
One quart4 drops
One gallon16 drops
5 gallons1 teaspoon

Mix water and hypochlorite thoroughly by stirring or shaking in a container. Let stand for 30 minutes before using. A slight chlorine odor should be detectable in the water. If not, repeat the dosage and let stand for an additional 15 minutes.

3. Water may also be purified by bringing it to a rapid boil.

Swimming pool or spa water should not be used as a primary source of drinking water, due to its chemical content.

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How to Get Off the Dialysis Machine in an Emergency Evacuation

Your professional staff should show you what to do in a disaster, including the location of your emergency pack. The emergency pack is usually attached to the dialysis machine, and contains scissors, tapes, clamps, and other items for an emergency disconnection.

If there is an emergency while you are on treatment, wait for directions from the staff. If no staff member is available to help you or give directions, here is what to do. **Remember, these directions are for emergency evacuation situations only.** Your access needles will be left in place until you get to a safe place.

Here are examples of disconnect procedures in use at some units:

Method 1 - Clamp and cut

- Use one clamp on each fistula line; pinch clamps closed.
- With scissors, cut the blood lines between the clamp and your dialysis machine (not the fistula line between the clamp and your access). Yes, there will be blood loss, and it will be unsightly.

Method 2 - Clamp and Cap

- Use one clamp for each blood line and each fistula line. Close thumb clamps (if available).
- Disconnect blood and fistula lines at the connector. Place a “cap” over the fistula line-lock end; this should screw on.

Care of your access

After disconnecting from your machine, go to the designated safe area. Wait for directions from the person in charge. This person could be a dialysis staff member or emergency personnel, such as a paramedic, police officer or fire fighter. Do not remove fistula needles until you are evaluated by medical personnel, or you are assured that you are in a safe area and out of immediate danger.

Under no circumstances should any medical personnel unfamiliar with your dialysis status place or inject anything into your vascular access.

**PAGES 30-33 ARE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK IN THIS
PUBLICATION.**

They contain phone numbers to ESRDnetworks.

For the most up to date phone numbers, visit the [Important Contacts](#) section of this website .

Emergency Instructions

- Stay at home, unless you are hurt.**
- Begin survival diet:
2 cups fluid per 24 hours, no fresh fruit or vegetables. See pages 22-25 in your guide for detailed diet instructions.**
- Wait at home for instructions and details about dialysis on TV, radio, messenger, or phone.**
- If you must go to a shelter, tell the person in charge about your special needs.**

Remember: Hospitals may not be equipped to provide maintenance dialysis treatments.

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For additional copies, contact your local ESRD Network. A listing is provided on page 29.