

Get Involved in Your Care!

Nobody knows how you feel and what you need better than you! This is why you should be involved in your care. Patients who help make decisions about their care have more control and feel better about the future, and there are many different ways that you can become involved.

One of the best ways to be involved is to participate in your plan-of-care meetings. Plan-of-care meetings give you an opportunity to learn more about your treatment plan, ask questions, and share with your care team what is important to you. These are held at least once a year and include your entire care team and any care partner you wish to invite. You may also request a plan-of-care meeting any time that you have concerns.

You may also attend support group meetings

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New Medicare Cards

THE FACTS

On April 1, 2018, Medicare started a year-long project to replace all current Medicare cards for beneficiaries by converting to alphanumeric ID numbers. Currently, your ID number is your social security number. New Medicare cards without social security numbers are being distributed from April 2018 to April 2019. The new Medicare card will come to you in the mail. You don't need to request it or do anything. It will just show up. Your existing card is good until the new one shows up.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Medicare will never call you unless you ask them to. Medicare does all communications by mail unless you ask them to call.

- Same goes for anybody saying they "work with Medicare to make sure you get everything you are entitled to."
- **DO NOT** give out information over the phone.
- Spread the word and feel free to share these notes.

Use your answering machine to screen calls or just don't answer a number you don't recognize.

If this happens to you, your friends, or loved ones, and personal info has been given out, (which happens considerably more often than you think), immediately take action to protect yourself against identity theft.

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with other patients just like you. Support group meetings allow you to meet other people who know exactly what it is like to have kidney disease. During support group meetings, you can share your experiences and learn from other patients about how to make healthy choices. Ask your social worker if your clinic or local community has support group meetings. If they do not, ask how you can help start one. You may also find online support groups by searching the internet (i.e. National Kidney Foundation).

Some other ways to be involved in your care are knowing your medicines, asking your dietitian about your diet and lab values, talking to your social worker if you want to work, go to school, or volunteer, and helping prevent infection and protecting your access by washing your hands before and after treatment. Also, attending your plan-of-care meetings and asking about QAPI meetings.

When you become involved in your care and understand your choices, you have more control over your health. That is an empowering feeling!

Infection Control

Why Are Infections and Germs Bad?

Infections are the second leading cause of death among dialysis patients. Dialysis patients are at a higher risk for infection because they have weaker immune systems, which is what fights off infections. Dialysis patients are at a higher risk for infection because they require a catheter, or needles placed in their access to start their dialysis treatment.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Infection?

- Fever and chills
- Soreness at the access site
- Redness or swelling at the access site
- Drainage at the access site

What Can I Do to Lower My Risk of Infection?

Wash your hands and access before getting in the dialysis chair. Let your dialysis staff know if you need help washing your access. Wash your hands when you leave the dialysis clinic.

Hand Hygiene Multiple Choice

1. What is the best way to prevent the spread of germs?
 - A. Wash your hands before leaving home
 - B. Wash your hands and access before sitting in the dialysis chair
 - C. Use hand alcohol prep
2. How long should you wash your hands?
 - A. 20 seconds – sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice
 - B. Until your hands are wet
 - C. Does not matter
3. What is the best way to wash your hands?
 - A. Use warm water
 - B. Use soap and water
 - C. Put soap on your hands and rub your palms together – be sure to wash the back of your hands and between your fingers

Answer key: 1. B 2. A 3. C

Treatment Options: Patient Story



Greetings! My name is Precious McCowan, and my eight-year journey on in-center hemodialysis has not always been a positive venture. I was diagnosed at the age of 25 with kidney challenges due to diabetes and hypertension. By the age

of 27, I was five years into my career and placed on hemodialysis. I thought my life was over. When I first started treatment, I thought I was in a twilight zone. I was still in denial at the fact that I would have to do dialysis three times a week for four hours, yet I was so young with many dreams and aspirations that were being placed on hold. I must admit, the first few years were hard with compliance, but one day I decided I would not let kidney disease defeat me! So, I took control of my health, while also getting involved as a Facility Patient Representative (FPR) at my dialysis unit, where I connect with patients through dialysis education. With this I have also established new friendships.

Although I have contemplated home dialysis and have been told that I would benefit greatly from home treatment modalities; I continue with in-

center treatment because of the associations I have with my fellow patients at my dialysis unit. I also chose in-center hemodialysis because it gives me the opportunity to engage more frequently with my healthcare team, and I believe this concept is the reason for my improved health conditions.

As a dialysis conqueror, I have never wanted to be a burden to my family, so home dialysis has always been questionable because of the assistance needed. As an FPR, I needed to do more to advocate for those challenged with kidney failure so; I joined Network 14 ESRD Patient Advisory Committee (PAC). And, I felt a devotion to collaborate with ESRD patient around the country to make a difference and bring awareness, so I linked with the National Patient and Family Engagement and Learning Action Network (NPFE-LAN). Being a part of these organizations has given me HOPE to keep THRIVING for myself and to be a guide for those struggling to cope on dialysis. Being an in-center hemodialysis patient, I have the opportunity to share and learn from others with similar medical conditions; these engagements have saved my life!

Depression: How Are You?

ESRD Network of Texas has been directed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to collaborate with 10 percent of the outpatient dialysis facilities within the state of Texas and to support facility efforts to increase the proper administration and documentation of depression screenings in 2018. Network 14 is also working towards decreasing a disparity gap between patients who live in rural areas and those who live in urban areas.

If you believe you may have symptoms of depression such as feeling like nothing will ever get better, loss of interest in things you used to do, major weight loss or weight gain, sleeping too much or not enough, feeling stressed or angry, feeling tired and drained, or having trouble staying focused, please speak with your doctor or social worker.



ESRD PATIENT EMERGENCY PLANNING CHECKLIST

Survival Tips:

- Keep a current list of your medicines and dosages and carry it with you. Also, keep a two-week supply of medicines and diet needs at home.
- Ask a friend or relative in another area to be your contact person. In an emergency, you may not be able to make telephone calls in your area, but may still be able to place calls to another area.
- Ask the staff in your unit for a copy of their disaster plan and read it carefully.
- Keep a copy of important medical information at your home and at your job, if you work outside the home.
- Wear a medical emblem. This has vital information about your medical condition and treatment, and alerts medical staff to your special needs.
- Prepare for loss of indoor plumbing. Basic sanitary needs can be met by using kitty litter, fireplace ashes or sawdust.

Emergency Kit Suggestions:

- First aid kit and local maps
- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger



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