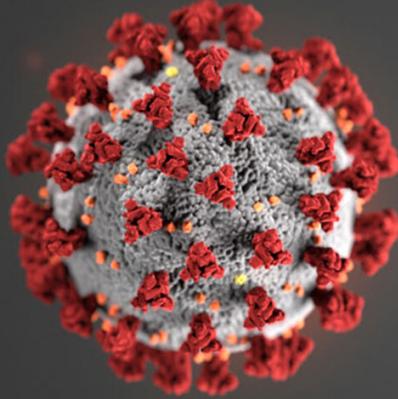


# COVID-19 UPDATE



END STAGE RENAL DISEASE  
NETWORK OF TEXAS

PATIENT NEWSLETTER: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



## WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, similar to the flu.

## STAYING HEALTHY

COVID-19 is impacting every part of our lives right now and we have all been asked to help “flatten the curve” to prevent more harm. To help with this, please:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. When your hands look dirty, soap and water are always best.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice social distancing. This means:
  - Stay at least 6 feet from other people
  - Do not gather in groups
  - Stay out of crowded places and avoid large gatherings
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately clean your hands.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces you often touch, such as cell phones, computers, countertops, handles, and light switches.
- Go to dialysis treatments. Missing treatment may result in a hospital visit. Hospitals are full of very sick patients right now. You should attend all your treatments; your dialysis clinic is the best place for you!
- Keep your access healthy. For grafts or fistulas, watch for signs of infection (redness, pus or swelling) and let your nurse know as soon as you suspect a problem. If you have a catheter access, be extra careful to prevent infection: keep the dressing on and keep it dry. If you get the dressing wet, tell your nurse at your next treatment.



## Symptoms of CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Fever

Shortness of breath

Cough

## KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

COVID-19 can range from mild symptoms to severe illness. COVID-19 symptoms include: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, call your facility right away to let them know. This helps your staff plan for your treatment or direct you to the hospital. Always inform staff of fever or respiratory symptoms before going into the treatment area.

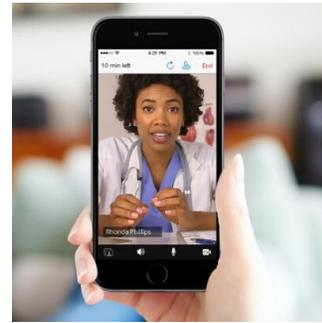


## CHANGES AT YOUR FACILITY

You may see changes as the dialysis facility prepares to keep you safe during treatment. This may include:

- Screening all patients for symptoms before entering the facility.
- No longer allowing visitors.
- Special instructions for patients with symptoms of COVID-19.
- More education about hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- A change in patient chair locations, treatment times, or days.
- A change in the gowns, facemasks, and eye protection that the staff wear or that you are asked to wear.

## NEW TELEHEALTH SERVICES



Telehealth and telemedicine are the sharing of electronic communication to provide routine care to patients. To limit the spread of COVID-19, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has given more access to Medicare telehealth services so that people can receive more services from their doctors without having to travel to a healthcare facility.

CMS is increasing this benefit on a short-term and emergency basis. As of March 6, 2020, Medicare can pay for office, hospital, and other visits by telehealth across the country and even in your home. During COVID-19, telehealth can be done by FaceTime or Skype. Many providers will be able to offer telehealth to you. Physician visits for home dialysis patients are available by telehealth. While you still have to go to your unit for dialysis, you may be able to attend other visits by telehealth to decrease the spread of COVID-19.

The following are a few of the providers offering telehealth services.

- Physicians- If you see a doctor for your blood pressure, diabetes, or other medical conditions, consider using telehealth.
- Therapists- Many counselors can still provide services and support to assist you with problem solving and coping skills.
- Transplant facilities- Some transplant facilities are still conducting initial transplant evaluations.

Telehealth is not required, so all providers may not offer this service. Reach out to your healthcare providers to learn if telehealth is available to you.



# COVID-19 CAN BE STRESSFUL... STAY POSITIVE

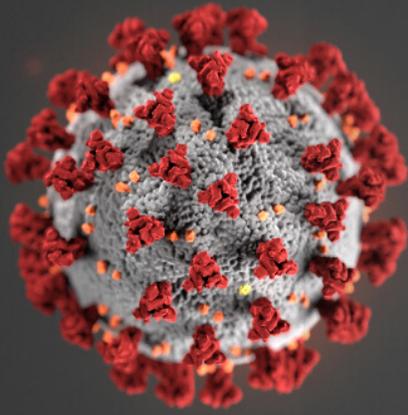
It is normal to feel stress during the outbreak of COVID-19. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

## Stress can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems and mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

## Ways to cope with stress:

- **Take breaks.** Have time away from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- **Take care of your body.**
  - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
  - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
  - Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep.
  - Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Maintain relationships and rely on your support system. Stay connected through regular phone calls, FaceTime, texts, and emails with friends and family. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- **Focus on positive thoughts.** Celebrate successes, start the day with listing things you are thankful for, and take satisfaction in completing tasks, even small ones.
- **Seek help when needed.** If you feel overwhelmed, talk to your social worker, pastor, counselor, or doctor. You may also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) helpline at **1-800-985-5990**.



# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Why is my facility requiring me to wear a mask?**

Wearing a mask during treatment can be uncomfortable, but a mask helps protect you from getting the virus and prevents you from giving the virus to others.

## **Why can I no longer eat during treatment?**

Most facilities are asking patients not to eat during treatment in order to help reduce the risk of spreading germs and the virus. Some facilities may make exceptions for patients who are diabetic or have another medical need to eat during treatment.

## **Will I still have transportation during COVID-19?**

Yes, Medicaid and public transportation (i.e., buses) are still providing transportation services for people who do not have COVID. They will also transport anyone who does not have symptoms of COVID or been in contact with someone with COVID; this is called a person under investigation (PUI). If you are COVID positive or a PUI, then you will not be able to use Medicaid or public transportation. In that case, you will need to be transported by family or use emergency transportation, such as an ambulance.

## **How can I protect myself while using transportation services?**

If possible, ask a family member, friend, neighbor or church member to drive you to and from treatment. If you must use transportation services:

- Bring disinfectant wipes to clean surfaces that are touched often (i.e., doorknobs, handles, seatbelts, and seats).
- If you are riding with others, request to sit at least 6 feet apart.
- Use hand sanitizer to disinfect your hands, when you do not have access to soap and water.
- When you get to your facility and back home, wash your hands with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.

## **What is the 3-Day Emergency Diet?**

The 3-Day Emergency Diet is the diet you should follow if there is an emergency and you cannot get to dialysis or if there are problems getting to the store to buy food. The 3-day Emergency Diet will provide you with enough nutrition and limit the amount of fluid and waste in your body until you can get your treatment. This diet does not take the place of dialysis or your kidney diet. It should only be followed for three days or fewer in an emergency situation. Talk to your dietitian about your emergency diet. You can view the diet at the Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition (KCER) website at <https://bit.ly/EmergencyKidneyDiet>.

**Information for this publication was obtained from CDC.gov and CMS.gov. and provided by Alliant Health Solutions ESRD Network 8.**