



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: How long will it take me to get used to my treatment?

A: Your body should get used to dialysis in a month or so. As dialysis removes wastes and fluids, you will start to feel better. Swelling and shortness of breath from extra fluid will go away. Food will taste better, and your color will improve. If these symptoms come back, you may need more dialysis.

Hemodialysis is easier on your body when you follow your fluid and sodium limits. If you drink too much fluid between treatments, you can get painful muscle cramps. Taking off too much fluid at a treatment can also make your blood pressure drop. This can make you feel dizzy, faint, or sick to your stomach. If you avoid salt/sodium you will not get thirsty. This way you will drink less.

You will get used to the needles soon, too. You can ask for medicine to numb the needle sticks. Some people always need numbing medicine. Others find that the pokes are quick enough that they don't need it. People who learn to stick themselves often find that it hurts less because they are thinking about what they are doing.

It often takes much longer for your mind to cope with dialysis. Some parts of dialysis can be hard to get used to, like a lack of privacy, loss of control over your schedule, and having other people take care of you. If these parts of dialysis continue to bother you, you may want to think about doing dialysis at home.

Kidney failure is a loss that most people grieve like the death of a loved one. It can take a year or more to come to terms with kidney failure. Keeping a positive attitude, learning all you can, and taking an active part in your treatment can help you adjust and build a good life.

Peritoneal dialysis (PD) also takes time to adjust to. You may feel very "full" and tight when you put dialysis fluid into your abdomen, until you get used to it. In time, this feeling goes away.

If you can use a cycler, your sleep may be disturbed at first, and you may have to turn over or even sit up to drain. Some people feel "pulling" when they drain, and the cycler may need to be adjusted until the treatments are comfortable and you can sleep well.

Getting used to having a catheter in your belly can be hard. Many people on PD need time to accept their changed bodies. It may help to think of the catheter as a life-saver. You will also need to fit the treatments into your daily routine. Talking to a partner or a social worker can help you work through your feelings and fit PD into your life.

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What I can do to get used to my treatments:

- Tell my nurse or technician right away if I feel sick at dialysis or at home.
- Tell my dietitian if I'm not hungry and don't eat like I should.
- Talk to my social worker if I need help coping with dialysis.
- Talk to other patients about how they got used to dialysis.
- Talk to my partner about his or her feelings about my treatments.
- Visit module 5 of Kidney School™: *Coping with Kidney Failure*, and module 11: *Sexuality and Fertility* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.
- Visit Home Dialysis Central at www.homedialysis.org to learn more.