



# Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

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## Q: How does the dialysis machine protect my safety?

**A:** Dialysis machines have built-in safety alarms. These alarms go off when something is wrong with the machine—or if something threatens your safety. When an alarm sounds, the machine needs to be checked.

A **hemodialysis** machine protects your safety by tracking air bubbles, temperature, flow of blood and dialysis fluid (dialysate), and pressure. Alarms on a hemodialysis machine will tell you if:

- Air bubbles are in the blood lines and could get into your body
- Dialysate is running low or the chemicals are not mixed up well
- The dialysate is too hot or too cold
- The blood flow or dialysate flow are not at the right speed
- Blood pressure in the machine is too low
- There is a clot in the dialyzer or in your access
- Blood is leaking somewhere in the system

A **peritoneal dialysis (PD)**ycler protects your safety by tracking temperature and flow of dialysate, pressure, and time. Alarms on a PD cycler can mean:

- The fluid has stopped filling and draining like it should

- The heater isn't working right
- The machine needs to be worked on
- The dialysate pressure is too high (often because the lines have been crimped)

### What *I* can do to protect my own safety:

- Ask my nurse or technician to show me how my dialysis machine works.
- Ask my nurse or technician to explain the alarms I might hear, what they mean, and what the staff or I can do about them.
- Learn my dialysis settings so I know if the machine is set the right way.
- Face the machine toward me during treatment so I can keep an eye on it.
- Visit module 2 of Kidney School™: *Treatment Options for Kidney Disease* at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org) to learn more.
- Visit Home Dialysis Central at [www.homedialysis.org](http://www.homedialysis.org) to learn more.