

## Dialysis dose and the secrets to a healthy, long life

By Dr. Suhail Ahmad  
Northwest Kidney Centers Chief Medical Officer

One of the most important things that affects the health and long life of dialysis patients is getting enough dialysis. In September, the New England Journal of Medicine published a study from the University of Minnesota. It showed more health problems happened directly after the two-day break from dialysis. This caused many people to worry that three-day-a-week dialysis was not enough.

**People on dialysis can lead healthy, long lives.** However, to stay as healthy as possible, you must follow your dialysis schedule and watch your diet very closely.

Healthy kidneys work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While hemodialysis cleans faster than real kidneys, it is used only about 12 hours each week. It's a good treatment that saves lives, but it isn't perfect.

The University of Minnesota study did not show a clear reason for increased health risks after the two days off. It may be the extra waste in the blood. Or, it may be the increase in sodium, fluid level or phosphate. The good news is that we know how to lower your risk of running into problems.

**The key is to keep waste, sodium, potassium and phosphate levels in your blood as low as possible on your days off.** Follow these simple tips to help ensure a healthy and long life on dialysis:



Dr. Suhail Ahmad

- **Don't shorten your dialysis treatments, especially the day before your two days off.** Start your break with the lowest possible amount of waste in your blood by getting your full dialysis run.
- **Take in less than 2,000 milligrams of sodium (salt) per day.** Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure. This raises the risk of heart attack, stroke and disease of the arteries. These are the most common causes of early death in kidney disease patients.
- **Take extra care to avoid foods high in phosphorus, and take your binders.** High phosphorus levels harden blood vessels, which can cause heart attack, stroke and arterial disease. Many healthy foods are high in phosphorus, so be sure to take your phosphate binders. These drugs bind with phosphorus and help keep it from being absorbed in the blood.

## The 2011 Patient Survey: Responding to your feedback

This year, nearly two-thirds of you made your voices heard! This allows us to act on what is important for you to be satisfied with your experience at Northwest Kidney Centers.

Overall, your opinion of us is high, much like past years. We asked, “Would you recommend Northwest Kidney Centers to someone who needed dialysis?” Seventy-eight percent of you said “Always” and 17 percent said “Usually.”

There is always room for improvement, but this feedback tells us that you mostly experience very good care at our centers. The staff who care for you are proud of that, even as we try to make needed changes in the future.

### Acting on last year’s patient response

In last year’s survey, we heard that the dialysis chairs were uncomfortable for many of you. Written reviews from many patients helped pick the new model. We replaced the oldest chairs first and will continue until all are new.

Most patients have found the new chairs much better. However, some smaller patients are still not comfortable. In the year ahead, we will look for ways to help with this problem.

In 2010, many patients felt the units were too cold. We sent plant operations crews to test the heating and cooling systems in every center and replace windows where needed. This year, many still feel too cold. We will keep working on this area of patient comfort.

## Our goals for the year ahead

This year, four out of 18 questions got statistically lower average scores than last year. No results were statistically higher. While scores were still good, we will focus especially on improving the areas where they dropped. They include:

- Staff working to protect patients from infection and disease. (Average score: 4.8)
- Patients feeling safe and secure during dialysis. (Average score 4.7)
- Patients knowing how to tell Northwest Kidney Centers their concerns. (Average score 4.4)
- Comfortable temperatures in the unit during dialysis treatments. (Average score 4.1)

*\*All scores based on a 5 point scale.*

## How did your unit do?

Each unit will look at feedback specific to them. How did yours do?

### “How would you rate your entire experience with all staff and services at Northwest Kidney Centers?”

	Overall Score (5 point scale)	Response Rate
<b>NKC Overall</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>65%</b>
Home Hemodialysis	4.84	66%
Port Angeles	4.70	100%
Snoqualmie Ridge	4.67	78%
Peritoneal Dialysis	4.67	67%
Totem Lake	4.60	80%
Lake City	4.44	100%
Seattle, 3rd Floor	4.43	65%
Broadway	4.42	47%
Auburn	4.40	71%
Scribner	4.39	87%
SeaTac	4.39	52%
Kent	4.26	41%
Lake Washington	4.25	71%
Mount Rainier	4.25	41%
Elliott Bay	4.24	76%
West Seattle	4.24	79%
Seattle–SCU	N/A	2%

## **Is home dialysis right for you? Join a Next Step class to find out!**

Many Northwest Kidney Centers patients find that home dialysis means feeling better and having a more normal lifestyle. Have you ever wondered if it might be right for you?

To help you find out, we offer two classes, Next Step PD and Next Step Home Hemo. Each class gives you in-depth information about one type of home dialysis. You'll have a chance to ask all your questions, meet the home dialysis staff and tour the home training unit.

Choosing home dialysis is a big decision, and you need the facts to decide if it's right for you. After class, if you choose to move forward with home dialysis, the staff will help you make a plan.

If you're an in-center hemodialysis patient or a pre-dialysis patient who's attended a Choices class, come to one class or both.

### **To find out more or to register:**

In-center dialysis patients call:

Home Hemodialysis Unit  
206-292-2558 or 1-877-216-2558

Peritoneal Dialysis Unit  
206-292-2285 or 1-877-292-2285

Patients not yet on dialysis call:

CKD Department  
206-292-2771, ext. 1082

## **New Renton Kidney Center now open for patients**

Our newest dialysis center is located at 602 Oakesdale Ave. SW in Renton. Patients from Mount Rainier moved into this unit on Oct. 31. Volunteers were there to serve as greeters.

This beautiful and expanded space allows us to serve patients better in South King County, where the need for kidney care is growing the fastest. The space also offers a new hub for home dialysis training.

Our former Mount Rainier center at 4242 East Valley Rd. in Renton will become the Mount Rainier Pavilion to house our hospital services staff.



## When the weather outside gets frightful... Be prepared!

Winter weather can be a serious problem if it gets in the way of dialysis treatments. Do you know what to do if you can't get to your unit?

Talk with your care team now to make an emergency plan. They can help you be safe and get ready for the season ahead. Here are a few reminders:

### *Nutrition*

**Ask your dietitian for details about the emergency diet plan.** If you need to survive without dialysis for a few days, you must cut back more than usual on protein, potassium, salt and fluids. Make sure you have an emergency stock of the right foods and all the tools you need to prepare them.

### *Prescriptions*

**Build an emergency supply of prescriptions and keep an up-to-date list on hand.** Insurance companies let you get refills a few days before you run out of medicine. Start refilling a little early, so you collect at least a week's supply of extras. You may want to keep some at work, too. Just be sure not to let the medicines expire.

### *Contact information*

**Have a list of current contact information for your doctor, dietitian, dialysis center, friends and relatives.** Make sure that your unit has up-to-date contact information for you, too. Try to give three different ways to contact you.

### *Travel plan*

**Make a backup plan for getting to dialysis if normal travel plans fall through.** Tell your dialysis center your plan, too.

### *Emergency kit*

**Make sure you have an emergency supply kit.** Show your list to your social worker or case manager to make sure you haven't forgotten anything. Have a first-aid manual as well.

**Northwest Kidney Centers wants to help you stay safe if you can't dialyze. Ask your care team for complete information, so you are ready for winter weather (or any emergency).**



### **Emergency items: What to have at home**

- Emergency diet food, enough for 3-5 days
- Paper plates, cups, bowls, utensils
- Can opener (non-electric)
- Aluminum foil
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Candles and matches in a waterproof container
- First-aid kit
- Sharp knife and scissors
- Paper towels
- Baby or sanitary wipes
- Garbage bags
- Gallon jugs of distilled water (one gallon for each person)
- Bleach and eyedropper for purifying water (use 16 drops per gallon of water)

## A plate for every patient! Adapting USDA meal guidelines for kidney patients

By Katy Wilkens, MS, RD  
Nutrition & fitness services manager



Katy Wilkens

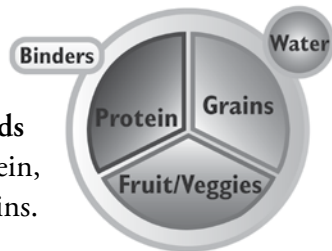
Forget the food pyramid. It's time for us to start looking at diet the way it comes in real life – on a plate!



This diagram from the USDA shows how a healthy meal should look for a person without kidney disease.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a new healthy-diet teaching tool called MyPlate. For most people, it is a great way to make sure their diet is well balanced. However, it needs to be adapted for dialysis, transplant and chronic kidney disease patients.

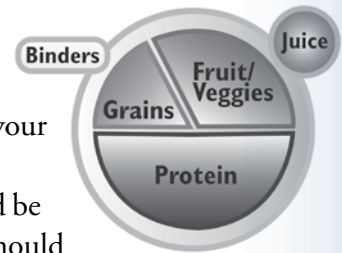
**If you are on hemodialysis, your plate is divided into thirds** – one third each for protein, fruits/vegetables and grains. Compared to a healthy person's plate, this reduces high potassium foods. It also increases protein, which people on hemodialysis need more of. The dairy serving has disappeared because of its high phosphorus content. Your beverage glass is also



Hemodialysis Plate

smaller to limit fluid gains. Notice, there is no salt shaker next to your plate. Giving up salty foods is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself.

**If you are on peritoneal dialysis or daily at-home hemodialysis, your plate looks different too.** Half of your plate should be protein. Another third should be fruits and vegetables. On these

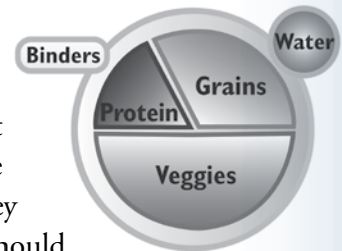


Home Dialysis Plate

treatments, you lose more potassium than on in-center dialysis, so you get to eat more fruits and veggies. The small remaining part of your plate is for grains. This amount is limited because PD patients get extra carbohydrates from the dialysate solution.

**For people with chronic kidney disease (CKD)**

– both those who are not yet on dialysis, and those with a functioning kidney transplant – your plate should be made up of less than a quarter



CKD Plate

protein. Too much protein makes the kidneys work too hard. Next, a little over a quarter of your plate is for grains. The remaining half should be filled with fruits and vegetables. Just the opposite of most dialysis patients' plates! Patients with a kidney transplant should add dairy foods back onto their plate to get enough calcium.

**All dialysis patients, and also many CKD folks, need to add phosphate binders to their plate.**

Check with your doctor about how many binders and when to take them. Most people take two to five of these pills with their meals.

For more information on ways to improve your diet, call your Northwest Kidney Centers dietitian at 206-720-3990, or go to [www.nwkidney.org](http://www.nwkidney.org) for great recipes and nutrition information.

## Coach's Corner

### **SIMPLIFY for freedom**

By Sharon Pahlka  
Kidney patient and life coach

What can you and I do to simplify our lives?

Some years ago, a friend of mine went to a foreign country for a two-year missionary assignment. When she was getting ready to return home, she gave away the few things she had collected there. All she had left fit on one shelf in her closet. She wrote me and said, "I can't tell you how freeing it is to know that all your earthly belongings can fit on one shelf. It makes life so simple."



Sharon Pahlka

The things we own often end up owning us, don't they? All these things we think we need also complicate our lives, take up our time, cost us money and distract us from living.

How do we know when our life is sinking in a sea of belongings? Maybe it's when we get so attached to the things we have that we can't imagine getting rid of them. When we think of things as our true treasures, we tend to want more and more of them. However, when we think of our time, our family and our friends as treasures, we don't care about things as much.

Regular de-cluttering – just 15 minutes a day – works little miracles. Remind yourself that decreasing the pile can make your life easier. Ask yourself if each item makes your life better. If it doesn't, toss it! Asking that question can help you know what to keep and what to let go.

You will be surprised to see how energized and free you feel when your life is not so cluttered with stuff. It starts with small steps. Join me in simplifying for freedom.

**Coaching question:** What would your life look like if you scaled down and simplified?

**Coaching tip:** Start now to simplify, even if it means starting very small.

#### Quotes:

"To be simple is to be great."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

"God made man simple, but how he changed and got complicated is hard to say."

—Johann von Goethe

*Output* is also available online at [www.nwkidney.org](http://www.nwkidney.org).

This newsletter provides general information and is not intended to serve as a treatment guide. Do not change your treatment unless your nephrologist or transplant team directs you to do so.

The mission of Northwest Kidney Centers is to promote the optimal health, quality of life and independence of people with kidney disease through patient care, education and research.

Joyce E. Jackson, president and CEO



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For questions or feedback, please contact Northwest Kidney Centers Public Relations Department at [pr@nwkidney.org](mailto:pr@nwkidney.org).



Pharmacy manager Tom Montemayor knows patients by name.

## Northwest Kidney Centers Pharmacy: Convenience and better care

Are you taking advantage of the experts in our pharmacy? They offer specialty service for kidney patients. Plus, you can get free and handy at-home prescription delivery once a month.

Your medications can be hard to understand. That's why our pharmacy focuses on the needs of dialysis and transplant patients. When you have questions, our expert pharmacists are there to help.

For questions or for more information on how our pharmacy can meet your needs, call 206-343-4870.

**Northwest Kidney Centers Pharmacy is located at 700 Broadway in Seattle. It offers many useful benefits, including:**

- Caring service from experts in dialysis and transplant medications.
- Competitive pricing and a 10 percent discount when you pay in cash.
- One free prescription delivery every month.
- Full service for all prescription needs.
- Easy access by email or at 206-343-4870.

## Flu vaccine: It's not too late!

Have you gotten this year's flu vaccine? If not, there's still time, but don't wait too long!

The peak flu season has almost arrived, and it takes two weeks for the vaccine to protect you fully. As a dialysis patient, you have more risk for complications from the flu. That means it's best not to get the flu in the first place.

Urge your friends and family to get the vaccine, too, so they won't pass around the virus!

Flu shots are free for all Northwest Kidney Centers patients. To get yours, ask the charge nurse or case manager at your unit.



## Holiday cooking class: Your favorite recipes of the season

This holiday season, our dietitians are making some of your favorite recipes more kidney-friendly. Learn all the tips and tricks at the upcoming class.

### Healthy Holiday Favorites Cooking Class

Sunday, Nov. 13, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Blagg Pavilion  
14524 Bothell Way NE  
Lake Forest Park, WA 98155

Cost: \$5 per person

To register, contact:

Katie Huff  
206-720-3990  
huffk@nwkidney.org

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## Save the date! Ceremony of Remembrance

Saturday, Dec. 3, 10-11 a.m.  
SeaTac Pavilion  
17900 International Blvd. S.  
SeaTac, WA 98188



Each year, Northwest Kidney Centers honors members of our community who have passed away with a Ceremony of Remembrance.

We invite everyone who has lost a loved one to attend this nonreligious ceremony led by our chaplain. You may bring a photo or other remembrance to display on a table in your loved one's honor.

Join us for this chance to celebrate the life of the person you lost with others who share your experience.

For more information about this special event or to ask for a mailed invitation, contact:

Sonja Coffman  
206-720-8518  
sonja@nwkidney.org