

Your doctor's office or the emergency room? Where you go for care matters

When a health issue comes up, where should you go for care? For many medical problems, you should go to your regular health care provider first because he or she knows you and your medical history. Whether it's your primary physician or nephrologist, this is the best place to start.

Use a hospital emergency room for very serious or life-threatening problems. Hospital emergency rooms are not the place to go for common illnesses or minor injuries.



For most medical problems, your doctor is the best place to start.
Dr. Astier Alem checks in with Nelle Short at Kirkland.

Talk with your nephrologist to get ready for the unexpected:

- 👍 What symptoms should concern you?
- 👍 Who should you call if you have problems? Who should you call in the evenings or on weekends?
- 👍 When should you call 911 or go to the emergency room?
- 👍 What health care problems is the nephrologist managing for you? Just your kidneys, or other problems such as diabetes too?
- 👍 When should you contact your primary care physician?

Maintaining healthy calcium levels in your body



Registered dietitian Beth Shanaman goes over nutrition tips with Seattle patient Damo Saho.

Maintaining proper levels of calcium is important to good health when you are on dialysis. A healthy range is 8.4 to 10.2 mg/dL.

When the calcium level in your blood is low, your parathyroid gland makes parathyroid hormone (PTH), which raises your calcium level back to normal. The change happens because PTH pulls calcium from your bones. This puts more calcium and phosphorus into your blood. If your PTH is high, you can get weak bones, which break easily.

Active vitamin D can help keep your PTH level down and maintain healthy calcium levels. Active vitamin D is different from regular vitamin D that you buy over the counter. Some patients take oral medications with active vitamin D such as calcitriol, Zemplar or Hectorol. Most hemodialysis patients take Zemplar, which is given with their dialysis.

Another medication that can lower your PTH is Sensipar. Both active vitamin D and Sensipar bind on the parathyroid gland, telling you don't need to break down your bones.

Too much calcium isn't good for you either. When your calcium is high, it can be deposited in soft tissue like your heart and blood vessels and clog them up, contributing to heart disease. When calcium increases, your care providers decrease vitamin D supplements, decrease the calcium in the dialysis bath, and change to a phosphorus binder that contains no calcium.



If your PTH or calcium levels are high, talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian about ways to lower them. Always tell your care providers if you are taking any vitamins or nutritional supplements like vitamin D.

Get active to feel better

Getting exercise is an important part of having a healthy life, especially for people on dialysis. Activity can give you more energy, help you feel better and can even slow down kidney disease. Movement helps keep your muscles healthy and rebuilding. You can:

- ✓ Increase energy, flexibility and strength
- ✓ Reduce stress and feel better
- ✓ Eat and sleep better
- ✓ Improve your heart and blood flow

Make a plan to get out and move!

- ✓ **Exercise videos** are available from the library, video rental stores, or online services such as Netflix.
- ✓ **Walk!** Take strolls around the neighborhood, or try mall walking during winter months to stay active.
- ✓ **Exercise bands** help with gentle stretching to improve flexibility and strength.
- ✓ **Exercise balls** improve balance, stretching and strength.
- ✓ **Exercise cycles** or bikes improve blood flow and strengthen leg muscles. You can borrow a Pedlar cycle from your clinic during dialysis.
- ✓ **Community fitness centers** often have special programs for people with medical issues.



John Morgan plays basketball with his son Jayman. John dialyzed at our Renton clinic until his transplant in June 2014.

What's next? Maybe home dialysis or a transplant?

Our free classes will help you figure out your next step



David Lum does peritoneal dialysis at home.

There's no place like home

Home dialysis allows you to have a more normal lifestyle. It gives you independence and flexibility and lets you eat a less restricted diet. You set your treatment schedule and you don't have to worry about making it to dialysis on time. Learn more at a Next Step Home Hemodialysis or Next Step PD class.

A new kidney

At our Next Step Transplant class, learn about transplant qualifications, living donor and deceased donor transplants, the waitlist, and how to live well with a transplant.

Visit www.nwkidney.org to see a list of all our upcoming free classes.



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Northwest Kidney Centers promotes the optimal health, quality of life and independence of people with kidney disease through patient care, education and research.



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A new, colorful Northwest Kidney Centers website to help you easily find tools you need



We have launched a new website at www.nwkidney.org!

It includes:

- ➔ Basic information for people wanting to learn more about chronic kidney disease – good for you to use and to share with loved ones.
- ➔ A colorful, comprehensive recipe bank, sortable by meal type and nutrients. You can search for recipes by different nutrition requirements based on your dialysis treatment and dietary needs.
- ➔ A list of free classes arranged so you can easily find the nearest time and place. Sign up to learn about home dialysis or getting a transplant.
- ➔ Easy access to order prescription refills from the Northwest Kidney Centers pharmacy.
- ➔ News about research and how you can get involved.
- ➔ Ways to support our mission as a volunteer or donor.

See the new site at
www.nwkidney.org.

Questions or feedback?
 Email pr@nwkidney.org.