

Dialysis Patients: Being Prepared for an Emergency

My numbers to call in an emergency:

Dialysis unit: _____

Home Dialysis unit: _____

Keep this pamphlet nearby.

Dialysis Patients: Being Prepared for an Emergency

This pamphlet is for patients who are:

- › receiving hemodialysis in a dialysis unit in-centre (in the health centre) in a hospital.
- › receiving hemodialysis in a rural satellite dialysis unit.
- › receiving peritoneal dialysis (PD) or hemodialysis in their own home.

This pamphlet explains what to do in an emergency (like a snowstorm, long power outage, or other natural disaster), including:

- What to do if you think there will be an emergency
- What to do if you cannot get your usual treatment
- Who to contact when an emergency happens

Make sure your dialysis unit has your correct contact information and an alternate (second) phone number in case we need to reach you.

What is an emergency?

- Not being able to get to your dialysis treatment (in-centre or at a satellite unit) because of a storm or severe (very bad) weather.
- Not being able to start or finish your dialysis treatment in your home because of a long power outage (either hemodialysis or PD with the cyclor).

Who do I contact if I cannot make it to dialysis?

Call the dialysis unit where you receive your hemodialysis treatment.

Who do I contact if I cannot do dialysis at home (PD or home hemodialysis)?

Call the home dialysis unit.

What should I do if there is an emergency?

- **Limit how much fluid you drink.** This includes anything that is a liquid at room temperature or that would melt at room temperature (like ice cream or Jell-O®).
- **Limit how much salt and potassium you eat.** Choose the foods you eat carefully.
- If a snowstorm is expected, try to arrange to stay closer to your dialysis centre.

- If you are doing your own dialysis at home, do your treatment before the storm starts, if possible.

PD cyclers patients

If there is a power outage:

- › **Do not use a generator to run your cycler.**
- › Turn off your cycler machine and unplug it.
- › Do a Twin Bag™ exchange instead (if you have been taught how to use it and you have the supplies).
- › Call the home dialysis nurse or on-call nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Home hemodialysis patients:

- Unplug your dialysis machine and water treatment system if you think the power may go out. **Do not plug the machine or the system back in until after the power is back on.**
- **Do not use a generator to run your dialysis machine or water treatment system.**
- Once the power is back on, disinfect the machine before your next dialysis treatment.
- **If it has been more than 72 hours (3 days) since the machine was used, disinfect both the machine and the water treatment system before doing dialysis.**

- Call the home dialysis nurse or on-call nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

What medication should I take if I cannot have my dialysis treatment?

- You may get a prescription for Kayexalate®. It is important to get this prescription filled and have it on hand in case of an emergency. Make a note of when your supply expires and get it refilled, as needed.

Your dialysis nurse or doctor will tell you when to take Kayexalate®. Do not take it unless you are told to do so.

- Kayexalate® is a drug used to treat high potassium levels in the blood. If not treated, high potassium levels may lead to an irregular heartbeat or cause problems with muscles and nerves.
- **Remember**, Kayexalate® must be mixed with 1/2 cup (4 ounces) of water.

Common questions

How can I manage my fluid intake?

- Remember your fluid restrictions:
 - › **For hemodialysis patients:** 2 cups plus however much you have urinated (peed) in the last 24 hours (1 day).
 - › **For PD patients:** 4 cups plus what you have urinated in the last 24 hours.

How and when will I be told if the unit will not be open, or will be closing early?

If we must close, we will do our best to contact you directly as soon as possible.

If the unit closes, when and where will I get my dialysis treatment?

- **For satellite dialysis patients:** We will do our best to keep you in your own satellite unit.
- We may need to change the time and/or day of your treatment for a short time.
- You may need to have your treatment at the main in-centre unit once it is safe to do so.

What should I do if I miss a dialysis treatment and I am feeling short of breath?

- Always watch what you eat and limit your fluid and salt intake if you miss a dialysis treatment.
- **If you get very short of breath, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**

If there is a long power outage, what should I do with my Aranesp® or Eprex®?

- If your power has been out for more than 12 hours, ask your local pharmacy or hospital pharmacy if they will refrigerate your Aranesp® or Eprex® during the power outage.
- You can also take it to a family member or friend who has power to refrigerate it for you.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with
a registered nurse about your health care
questions 24/7.**

