

Patient & Family Guide  
2025

# Emergency Preparedness for Dialysis Patients

**My numbers to call in an emergency:**

Dialysis unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Home dialysis unit: \_\_\_\_\_

**Keep this pamphlet nearby.**



Aussi disponible en français : FF85-1901

[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Emergency Preparedness for Dialysis Patients

This pamphlet is for patients who are having:

- dialysis treatment in a dialysis unit in-centre (in a health centre or a hospital).
- dialysis treatment in a rural satellite dialysis unit.
- peritoneal dialysis (PD) or hemodialysis treatment in their 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 call when there is an emergency

**Make sure your dialysis unit has:**

- › Your correct phone number
- › A correct backup (2<sup>nd</sup>) phone number

## **What is an emergency?**

- Not being able to get to your dialysis treatment outside your home because of severe (very bad) weather.
- Not being able to start or finish your dialysis treatment (either PD or hemodialysis) in your home because of a long power outage.

## **Who do I tell if I cannot make it to dialysis?**

Call your dialysis unit where you have your hemodialysis treatment.

## **Who do I tell if I cannot do my dialysis treatment (PD or hemodialysis) at home?**

Call your 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 storm is expected, try to arrange to stay closer to your dialysis centre.
- If you are doing your dialysis at home, do your treatment before the storm starts, if possible.

## **PD patients:**

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

## **Home hemodialysis patients:**

- If there is a power outage or if you think the power may go out:
  - › Unplug your dialysis machine and water treatment system.
  - › **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.

- › When 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®. This is a medication used to treat high potassium levels in the blood. If high potassium levels are not treated, they may lead to an irregular heartbeat or cause problems with your muscles and nerves.
- **It is very important to:**
  - › Get your prescription for Kayexalate® filled.
  - › Have your Kayexalate® on hand in case of an emergency.
  - › Make a note of when your supply expires and get it refilled, as needed.
- **Kayexalate® must be mixed with ½ cup (4 ounces) of water.**

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

## Common questions

### How can I manage my fluid intake?

Remember your fluid restrictions.

- **Fluid restrictions for PD patients:**
  - › 4 cups of fluid, plus the amount you have urinated (peed) in the last 24 hours (1 day).
- **Fluid restrictions for hemodialysis patients:**
  - › 2 cups of fluid, plus the amount 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 need to close, we will do our best to contact you directly as soon as we can.

### 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 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.**

### **What should I do with my Aranesp® or Eprex® if there is a long power outage?**

- 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 ask a family member or friend who has power to refrigerate them for you.

## Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by: Community Dialysis  
Designed and Managed by: Library Services*

WQ85-1564 © February 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
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