



# Preparing for Emergencies:

## A Guide for People on Dialysis



**IMPORTANT:** This booklet has helpful information for people on dialysis. However, you should always ask your doctor for medical advice. The tips in the booklet may NOT work for every patient or in every emergency situation. You may have special health problems or conditions that will need to be handled differently. Talk to your doctor and renal dietitian to discuss which of the tips in this booklet can work for you, and which tips you should adjust.

If you need immediate medical attention at any time, try to contact your doctor, or dial 911 (where available).

# **Preparing for Emergencies:**

## A Guide for People on Dialysis

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

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Ann Albano, RN, CNN  
Herbert Davis  
Sandy Gustafson, RD  
Ann Holmes-Heintz, RN  
Brian O'Moore  
Kent & Patty Stewart  
Joan Van Wagner, BA, RN

*Helping you help yourself.*

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# Introduction

Emergencies caused by severe weather or disasters can happen with or without warning. If you need dialysis, having power and water, transportation, or supplies may be very important. Some emergency situations may make it impossible for you to get to your dialysis facility or give yourself dialysis. It is important to be prepared so you can feel better and stay healthier.

## **This booklet explains:**

- Helpful tips.
- How to prepare for an emergency.
- How to disinfect water.
- Helpful contacts for more information.

*Preparing for Emergencies* has important information to help keep you healthy.

# Helpful Tips in an Emergency

1. Stay at home unless you are hurt, as long as it is safe to do so. Instructions for dialysis patients may be available on TV, radio, or by phone or messenger. Depending on the nature of the emergency, you might want to call your dialysis facility or doctor, because he or she might be able to help you manage this emergency.
2. Take a fanny pack or backpack stocked with emergency supplies, food, and medication with you if you will be away from home when severe weather or a natural disaster is predicted.
3. Make sure your dialysis facility knows where to find you.
4. Start your emergency diet (see page 22) **as soon as an emergency situation is predicted or occurs**, if it could delay your next regular dialysis treatment.
5. If you must go to a shelter, tell the person in charge about your special health needs.
6. If you need medical treatment, make sure your dialysis access is not used for anything other than your dialysis treatment. No one should use your access to give you fluid or medication.
7. Follow the instructions in this booklet to be prepared.

**Remember:** Hospitals may not be able to give you maintenance dialysis treatments.

## **Travel Tips**

1. Make arrangements for dialysis at your destination, or have necessary equipment or supplies delivered ahead of time.
2. Carry an extra 2-3 day supply of all your medicines/ supplies in your hand-carried luggage and keep it with you at all times. A fanny pack or backpack may be more convenient. If your luggage is lost or misplaced, you will still be able to take your medicine until it is found or you can get another supply.



# Steps to Prepare for an Emergency

1. Gather and carry important medical information.
2. Ask your facility about how to find out about alternative arrangements for treatment.
3. Prepare an emergency stock of supplies, food, and medicines.
4. Know what diet to follow if your dialysis must be delayed.

## Step 1

### Gather and Carry Important Medical Information

If you must go to a different dialysis center or hospital for treatment during an emergency or travel, or if you need emergency health care, the medical staff need to know your medical status so you can get the right treatment. When your kidneys don't work, your body processes medicines differently. You must also reduce your fluid intake. Keeping medical staff aware of your medical status helps protect you from getting treatment that could be harmful to you. Keep your medical information with you at all times. You may also want to give a copy to a caregiver or family member.

To help you keep this important information handy, a medical history form is printed on the next few pages. Fill it out and keep it with you at all times.

# Medical History

Print this information clearly and update it regularly.

Date updated: \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

## Insurance Information

Medicare Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(From your red, white, and blue Medicare card)

Other Insurance: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Medical Information

Primary ESRD diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_

Other medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Allergies or complications: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other (previous operations, illnesses): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your usual dialysis treatment (check one):

- Center hemodialysis
- Home hemodialysis
- Chronic ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD)
- Chronic cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD)
- Intermittent peritoneal dialysis (IPD)

Your dialysis center: \_\_\_\_\_

(Name of center)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your doctors: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Other emergency phone numbers:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local utilities: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Current Medications

You need to carry information about all the medicines you take. List those prescribed by your doctor and any over-the-counter medicines you may take.

| <b>Name of Medication</b> | <b>Dosage</b><br>(Like 50 mg) | <b>Frequency</b><br>(Like twice a day) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
|                           |                               |  |
|                           |                               |  |
|                           |                               |  |
|                           |                               |  |
|                           |                               |  |
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|                           |                               |  |

## Medical Emblem

If you are injured or unable to communicate, medical staff need to know quickly if you are a person on dialysis and any other important facts about your health. One way to alert people to your health needs is to wear a medical emblem on a bracelet or necklace. It shows an internationally recognized symbol that lets people know your medical diagnosis, such as “Diabetes.” It also provides a phone number medical staff can call to get more detailed medical information about you. Wearing a medical emblem **at all times** helps ensure that you get the care you need, and that you don’t get care that could be harmful to someone with your medical condition. Also carry the medical information card that comes with the emblem. It has important information and may reduce the need for phone calls to the emblem registry service.

**NOTE:** A necklace might be missed if your upper body clothes are rolled up. A bracelet is easy to see, but it shouldn’t be worn on the same side as your dialysis access. It could block blood flow if it is pulled up the arm.

### **To get a medical emblem:**

Ask your nurse or social worker for information about medical emblems. They can give you information about the National Kidney Foundation (1-800-488-2277) or the American Kidney Fund (1-800-638-8299). In some areas, these organizations cover the cost of your first emblem.

Other sources of medical emblems include:

- MedicAlert Foundation, 2323 Colorado Avenue, Turlock, CA 95382, or call 1-800-ID-ALERT (1-800-432-5378).
- Body Guard, 111 East Parkway Drive, Egg Harbor Township, NH 08234, or call (1-609-646-4777).
- Your local pharmacy.

## **Step 2**

### **Make Alternative Arrangements For Your Treatment**

#### **If you get in-center hemodialysis:**

- Make sure your dialysis center has your current street address and phone number in case they need to contact you.
- Make arrangements for backup transportation to your dialysis facility.
- Get information about other dialysis facilities in your area. Find out if they provide the type of treatment you need. Contact the facility to be sure they can treat you if an emergency occurs and you cannot use your regular facility.

#### **If you get home hemodialysis:**

- Contact your water and power company ahead of time to register for special priority to restore your lost services. Keep their phone numbers up-to-date and easy to find.
- Keep a flashlight and batteries near your dialysis machine.



## **If you use Chronic Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD):**

- If you use an ultraviolet device, keep the battery charged at all times. The battery pack should last for 3 days.
- Keep a 5-7 day supply of peritoneal dialysis supplies at home. Check expiration dates and replace as needed or every 6 months.

## **If you use Continuous Cyclic Peritoneal Dialysis (CCPD):**

- If you use a cyclor, you may want to purchase a gasoline-powered generator that makes 110 volt AC alternating current. Or, if you have a car, you can run your cyclor off the cigarette lighter by using a 12 volt DC to a 110 volt AC inverter (available at electronics stores). If the car is in a garage, make sure there is plenty of fresh air and good ventilation.
- If you learn how to do manual CAPD, you will not need a generator or inverter. If you lose power and don't have a generator, switch from CCPD to manual CAPD.
- Keep a 5-7 day supply of CCPD (and CAPD if you have learned to do manual CAPD) supplies. Check the

expiration dates and replace as needed or every 6 months. If you work outside of your home, keep a 5-7 day supply at work.

- Contact your water and power company ahead of time to register for special priority to restore your lost services. Keep their phone numbers up-to-date and easy to find.

### **Step 3**

## **Prepare an Emergency Stock of Supplies, Medicines/Medical Supplies, and Food**

Keep your emergency supplies together. You may want to designate a box or some shelves for your emergency supply. Check and restock every 6 months.

### **Emergency Supply List**

- measuring cups, teaspoons and tablespoons, dropper
- plastic knives, spoons, forks
- pack of napkins and paper plates
- pack of plastic or styrofoam bowls
- paper towels
- pack of plastic cups
- candles
- matches
- can opener (manual)
- baby wipes
- sharp knife
- flashlight & batteries
- scissors
- garbage bags
- plastic jug for storing water
- 1 small bottle of household chlorine bleach
- piece of cloth, cheese cloth, or handkerchief
- strainer
- extra pair of eye glasses (in case first pair breaks)
- radio & batteries

## **Emergency Medication/Medical Supply List**

- first aid kit
- 5-7 day supply of all your medicine(s)
- 5-day supply of antibiotics (if you use peritoneal dialysis and recommended by your doctor)
- Diuretics (fluid pills), sorbitol, and Kayexalate for potassium control (if recommended by your doctor)

### **Also, if you are diabetic:**

- 5-7 day supply of syringes
- 5-7 day supply of insulin (Keep cool but do not freeze. Best kept refrigerated, but will keep at room temperature for up to one month.)
- 5-7 day supply of glucose monitoring supplies like lancets and alcohol wipes.
- If you use a glucose meter, have spare batteries and test strips.

### **If you have heart disease:**

- 5-7 day supply of all blood pressure, heart, or anti-clotting medications.

**NOTE:** If you use a mail service pharmacy, have them send your medicines a week before you run out. Allow extra time for processing and mailing back to you.

Also, keep a supply of medicine at your work place or any place you spend a great deal of time, like a family member's home.

## Emergency Food List (See Emergency Diet Plan on pages 22-27)

This list provides a 6 day supply of canned foods and water. Use fresh foods as long as they are available.

- 3 packages of dry milk OR 4 – 8 ounce (oz.) cans evaporated milk
- 1 or 2 gallons of distilled or bottle water
- 2 packages powdered fruit-flavored drink mix OR 1 container fruit-flavored drink (pre-mixed)
- 1-2 cans or bottles of soft drink
- 6-pack of 4 oz. cans or boxes of fruit juice (cranberry, apple, or grape)
- 6 boxes of single-serving cereal (No Raisin Bran)
- small box white sugar (or box of sugar packets)
- 12 – 4 oz. cans or “fruit bowls” of fruit (pears, peaches, oranges, mixed fruit, applesauce, or pineapple. NO raisins)
- 6 – 8 oz. cans of low sodium vegetables (carrots, green beans, peas, corn, or wax beans)
- 6 – 3 oz. or 4 oz. cans of low sodium meat (tuna, crab, chicken, salmon, or turkey)
- 1 jar peanut butter
- 1 small jar jelly or honey
- 3 small jars mayonnaise (or 8-12 single-serve foil wrapped packs)
- 1 loaf regular bread\* (not salt-free, with NO preservatives)
- 1 box vanilla wafers OR graham crackers
- 5 packages of candy (sourballs, hard candy, jelly beans, or mints)
- 1 package marshmallows
- 1 jumbo pack of chewing gum

\*Bread can be kept frozen for 3 months.

## Step 4

### **Know What Emergency Diet to Follow if Your Dialysis Might be Delayed**

Dialysis takes the waste from your blood. Wastes and fluid build up between dialysis treatments. Normally this build up is small and does not cause a problem between regular dialysis treatments. If your dialysis must be delayed, these wastes and fluids can add up and cause problems. To keep the build-up of protein wastes (BUN), potassium, and fluid as small as possible, you need to follow a special strict diet. **This diet plan is not a substitute for dialysis.**

The 3-Day Emergency Diet Plan (developed by the Northern California Council on Renal Nutrition) limits your protein (meat, fish, poultry, and egg), your potassium (fruits and vegetables), salt, and fluid intake more strictly than your regular renal diet. This diet provides about 40 grams of protein, 1,500 milligrams (mg) of sodium, and 1,500 mg of potassium per day.

If you can't get dialysis, your life can depend on limiting the amount of waste that builds up in your blood by changing your diet. Look at this diet plan with your renal dietician to see if it will work for you, or to see if it needs to be modified to fit your special health needs. This gives you a chance to ask questions before an emergency occurs. If you are on CAPD and can't get to your supplies to do your exchanges,

this emergency diet may also apply to you. **You should make every attempt to get dialysis within 3 days. But if it takes longer, be sure to continue the 3-Day Emergency Diet Plan until you can get your dialysis treatment.**

The meals can be stored and prepared with little or no refrigeration. If your refrigerator is still working, use fresh milk, meat, and poultry in the amounts listed in the diet. Your food may stay fresh for a few days if your refrigerator is not working if you limit the times you open its door. Use the fresh food first, before you start to use the canned food.

One egg or 1 ounce of meat that has been kept at a safe temperature can be switched for 2 tablespoons (tbsp.) of peanut butter or 1 oz. of low-sodium canned meat.

## **3-Day Emergency Diet Plan**

**DAY ONE** (Add 4 oz. of water to take medicine)

### **Breakfast**

Cereal and fruit:

- 1/2 cup milk or mix 1/4 cup evaporated milk with 1/4 cup distilled water from sealed containers or disinfected water
- 1 box of cereal (single-serving) (No Raisin Bran)
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 can (2 oz.) canned peaches (drained)

### **Morning Snack**

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1 1/2 squares)  
Sourballs (10)

### **Lunch**

Peanut butter and jelly sandwich :

- 2 slices of bread
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter
- 2 tbsp. jelly
- 1/2 cup canned pears (drained)
- 4 oz. (1/2 cup) pre-made powdered fruit drink

### **Afternoon Snack**

Marshmallows (10)  
1/2 cup canned applesauce



## **Dinner**

Chicken sandwich:

2 slices of bread

1/2 can (2 oz.) canned low sodium chicken\*

2 tbsp. mayonnaise\*

1/2 cup canned low sodium carrots (drained)

1/2 cup cranberry juice

## **Evening Snack**

Jelly beans (10)

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1 1/2 squares)

\*Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not refrigerated or used within 4 hours.

*If you are diabetic, avoid the sweets in this diet plan. However, have some high sugar content foods like hard candies in case you go “low” with too little sugar in your body.*

**DAY TWO** (Add 4 oz. of water to take medicine)

**Breakfast**

Cereal and fruit:

- 1/2 cup milk or mix 1/4 cup evaporated milk with 1/4 cup distilled water from sealed containers or disinfected water
- 1 box of cereal (single-serving) (No Raisin Bran)
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 can (2 oz.) canned pear (drained)

**Morning Snack**

- 1/2 cup canned applesauce
- Jelly beans (10)

**Lunch**

Chicken sandwich:

- 2 slices of bread
- 1/4 cup (1 oz.) canned low sodium chicken
- 1 tbsp. mayonnaise\*
- 1/2 cup pineapple (drained)
- 4 oz. (1/2 cup) pre-made powdered fruit drink

**Afternoon Snack**

- Mints (10)
- 1/2 cup canned applesauce

## **Dinner**

Tuna sandwich:

2 slices of bread

1/2 can (2 oz.) canned low sodium tuna\*

1-2 tbsp. mayonnaise\*

1/2 cup canned low sodium peas drained

1/2 cup cranberry juice

## **Evening Snack**

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1 1/2 squares)

Sourballs (10)

\*Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not refrigerated or used within 4 hours.

**DAY THREE** (Add 4 oz. of water to take medicine)

**Breakfast**

Cereal and fruit:

- 1/2 cup milk or mix 1/4 cup evaporated milk with 1/4 cup distilled water from sealed containers or disinfected water
- 1 box of cereal (single-serving) (No Raisin Bran)
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 cup cherries (drained)

**Morning Snack**

- Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1 1/2 squares)
- Hard candies (10)

**Lunch**

Peanut butter and jelly/honey sandwich:

- 2 slices of bread
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter\*
- 2 tbsp. jelly or honey
- 1/2 cup canned peaches (drained)
- 4 oz. (1/2 cup) cranberry juice

**Afternoon Snack**

- 1/2 cup canned applesauce
- Jelly beans (10)

## **Dinner**

Salmon sandwich:

2 slices of bread

1/2 can (2 oz.) canned low sodium salmon\*

1-2 tbsp. mayonnaise\*

1/2 cup canned low sodium green beans drained

1/2 cup soft drink

## **Evening Snack**

Vanilla wafers (5) or graham crackers (1 1/2 squares)

Marshmallows (10)

\*Perishable item: Throw away unused food in open containers if not refrigerated or used within 4 hours.

## How to Disinfect Water

Keep distilled or bottled water on hand for drinking. If you run out of stored water, you may disinfect available water for drinking, brushing your teeth, or for other uses. **Do not use disinfected water for dialysis.**

1. Strain water through a clean cloth or handkerchief to remove any sediment, floating matter, or glass.
2. Use 5.25% sodium hypochlorite solution (household chlorine bleach). **Do not use bleach that has active ingredients other than hypochlorite.**

**If the water is clear, use:**

| <b>Water</b> | <b>Bleach</b> |
|--------------|---------------|
| One quart    | 2 drops       |
| One gallon   | 8 drops       |
| 5 gallons    | 1/2 teaspoon  |

**If the water is cloudy, use:**

| <b>Water</b> | <b>Bleach</b> |
|--------------|---------------|
| One quart    | 4 drops       |
| One gallon   | 16 drops      |
| 5 gallons    | 1 teaspoon    |

Mix the water and bleach together thoroughly by stirring or shaking them in a container. Let the mix stand for 30 minutes before using it. The water should have a slight chlorine odor. If it does not, add the same amount of bleach again, mix thoroughly, and let it stand for an additional 15 minutes before using it.

**NOTE:** You may also purify water with rapid boiling for 10 minutes.

***Do not use water from a swimming pool or spa because of the chemicals used to treat the water.***

From *Water Disinfection and Storage*, Pacific Bell 1998.

# How to Get Off of a Dialysis Machine in an Emergency Evacuation

Your dialysis facility staff should show you what to do if you are on a dialysis machine in an emergency. The instructions should include where your emergency pack is kept and how to disconnect yourself from the dialysis machine. An emergency pack usually contains scissors, tape, clamps and other medical items and should be kept within your reach while you are on the dialysis machine.

If you are on a dialysis machine during an emergency, **stay calm and wait for instructions from the facility staff.** If no staff person is available to help you or give you directions, here is what to do. **Remember, these directions are for emergency evacuation situations only. Your access needles should be left in place until you get to a safe place. NEVER cut your access needle lines.**

## How to Clamp and Disconnect

- ➔ Clamp both access needle lines.
- ➔ Clamp both of the thicker blood lines. If the lines have pinch clamps, pinch all four clamps closed. Cut or unscrew the lines **between** the closed clamps. If you must cut your lines, cut **ONLY** the thicker blood lines.



**NEVER, NEVER cut your access needle lines. NEVER cut the line between the clamp and your access—you will bleed to death.**

➡ If you have a CATHETER, your professional staff should assist you. **Do not try to disconnect yourself.**

### **Care of Your Access in an Emergency**

After you have been disconnected from your dialysis machine, go to the designated safe area. Wait for directions from the person in charge. This person could be a dialysis facility staff member, or emergency personnel such as a paramedic, police officer, or firefighter. Do not remove your fistula needles until you have been checked by medical personnel, or until you are sure that you are in an area out of immediate danger.

**Under no circumstances should any medical personnel unfamiliar with your dialysis status place or inject anything into your vascular access.**

## **For More Information About:**

### **Medicare Coverage**

- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

### **Dialysis Facilities**

- Look at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web. Select “Dialysis Facility Compare.”

**Or, call your ESRD Network (see pages 34-35) for information about:**

- Dialysis or kidney transplants.
- How to get help from other kidney-related agencies.
- Problems with your facility that are not solved after talking to the staff at the facility.
- Locations of dialysis facilities and transplant centers.

Your ESRD Network makes sure that you are getting the best possible care, and uses mailings to keep your facility aware of important issues about kidney dialysis and transplants.

**Or, call your State Survey Agency (call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) for the phone number)** for assistance if you have problems with the facility that you cannot solve by talking to the facility staff. Your State Survey Agency makes sure that dialysis facilities meet Medicare standards.

**NOTE:** The telephone numbers on the following pages were correct at the time of printing. Phone numbers sometimes change. To get the most up-to-date phone numbers, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. Or, look at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web. Select “Helpful Contacts.”

Pages 34-37 of this document are intentionally left blank. They contain phone numbers pertaining to this publication. For the most recent contact information, visit the [Helpful Contacts](#) section of this web site.

# Emergency Instructions

- ➔ Stay at home, unless you are hurt.
- ➔ Begin survival diet:  
2 cups fluid per 24 hours, no fresh fruit or vegetables. See pages 22–27 in your guide for detailed diet instructions.
- ➔ Wait at home for instructions and details about dialysis on TV, radio, messenger, or phone.
- ➔ If you must go to a shelter, tell the person in charge about your special needs.

**Remember: Hospitals may not be equipped to provide maintenance dialysis treatments.**

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Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

[www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov)

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For additional copies, contact your local ESRD Network. A listing is provided on page 34.