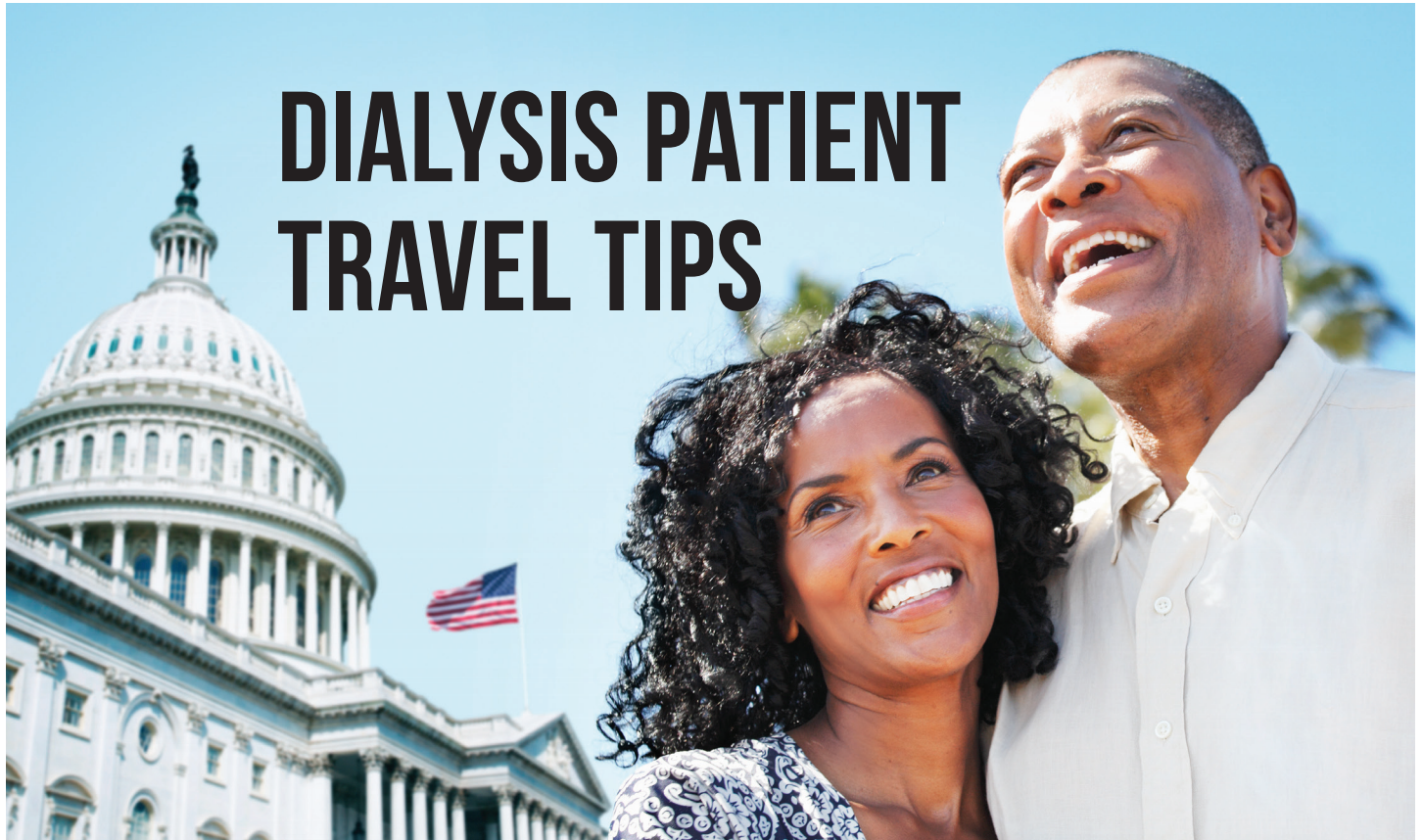


DIALYSIS PATIENT TRAVEL TIPS



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Patients who receive dialysis can travel without missing their treatments while away from home. Of course, you should always consult your doctor before planning to travel. Most doctors encourage travel if the patient is assessed as being relatively healthy. Traveling can give a big boost to a patient's morale and sense of well-being and prevent depression and alienation from friends and family members.

Planning for hemodialysis treatments when away from home:

Dialysis centers have staff members who are experienced in arranging dialysis treatments when patients are traveling. Some centers will assist patients in making their own arrangements. Ask your social worker or another member of your health care team with whom you should discuss your plans.

There are also dialysis cruise options available that provide hemodialysis treatments or support your home dialysis treatments. Each cruise has a board certified nephrologist, dialysis RNs, and a number of dialysis technicians depending on how many patients need dialysis while cruising. The treatment cost

is usually a flat rate depending on the length of the cruise. Unfortunately, Medicare and Medicaid will not cover the dialysis cost onboard any cruises, however there are many supplemental insurance companies that will reimburse a percentage. You can receive an itemized statement of your treatments so you can file a claim.

Start planning your trip as soon as you know the details, at least six to eight weeks in advance. It may be difficult to reserve a dialysis chair in a popular vacation spot or during holidays. Be flexible about the dates for your trip as space in dialysis units may be limited. If you would prefer to have your treatments on specific days and at specific times, let the center know in advance. The unit will usually make every attempt to honor your request.

You or your Patient Travel Coordinator may need to contact more than one center in order to find a center that can provide dialysis for you. Larger dialysis companies usually will give you several options if they are available. Check with the center as soon as you arrive to confirm your appointment dates and times. You may also want to visit the center and meet the staff so you will feel more comfortable and to complete the admission paperwork.



Last minute plans that need to include dialysis

Many dialysis centers make every effort to accommodate patients in the event of an emergency such as illness or death of a family member. Dialysis records can be faxed ahead, or you can hand carry them with you.

Required information for a dialysis facility

Your demographics: Name, address, phone number, emergency contacts, insurance

- Medical history and recent physical exam reports
- Recent lab results
- Recent EKG
- Recent chest x-ray
- Your dialysis orders and 3 to 5 recent treatment records to review trends of your treatments
- Dialysis access type and location - i.e., right upper arm fistula (RUAF), CVC or graft
- Special needs or dialysis requirements
- Information about your general health
- Where you will be staying in the area with contact names and phone numbers
- A list of the medications you take during treatment and at home

The medical director or clinical manager will review your records and communicate with your home facility with any questions to insure a smooth transition. In addition, you should hand carry a copy of your records with you.

Questions you may want to ask before visiting the facility you will be traveling to:

- Does the center reuse dialyzers?
- What are the hours and days of operation? Traveling patients often are placed on an evening shift, which could

end as early as 7:30 p.m. or as late as 2:00 a.m.

- Can you use the same type of dialyzer you use at your home center?
- Are there individual televisions for each patient?
- Are there visitor restrictions?
- Will you be seen by a Nurse Practitioner or Physician during your visit?
- Are patients permitted to eat or drink while on dialysis?
- Is an ice machine available for patients?
- Is public transportation available to get to the center?
- How many patients are assigned to each nurse or patient care technician?
- Can you get all the medications you get at your home center during dialysis?
- What is the referring hospital for emergencies?

How to prevent getting sick during your time away

Don't overschedule activities beyond your normal level. Allow enough time to enjoy sightseeing outings and activities without becoming overtired. Also, be sure to watch your diet and fluid intake. Before you begin your trip, you will most likely have a doctor assigned to you by your transient dialysis center. Find out how to contact the doctor when you first arrive. If you do become ill, call the dialysis center or doctor as instructed.

It is possible that a transient patient may require hospitalization. If this should happen to you, your transient doctor is prepared for this possibility and will care for you during your hospital stay. He or she will probably talk to your regular doctor to coordinate your care. You may feel more comfortable to know if this coordination has taken place. Being hospitalized while away from home can be a stressful experience for any patient, and it certainly can change your travel plans. Preparing ahead for this possibility can help make the experience less stressful. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Make sure your family knows your travel plans.
- Make sure you have important phone numbers with such names as your regular doctor, dialysis center, etc. Have a copy of your medical records with you while traveling.
- Make sure anyone who is traveling with you knows where you keep your records and what your medical needs are.
- Make sure to bring enough of the medications you need to take to last for the entire trip, with enough extra to deal with possible emergencies such as lost luggage or a spill. Also carry written prescriptions just in case.■



Home hemodialysis away from home

Some home hemodialysis patients make arrangements for in-center treatments while traveling to avoid having to pack up their machine. Some patients travel with their machines and equipment and simply perform their treatments at their convenience as they do at home.

Even if you do your own treatment, it is important to know where the closest dialysis center is where you could go for assistance. Let the center know when you will be in the area, and ask if they would be willing to provide medical assistance if needed. Carry complete medical information with you. Remember that most dialysis and equipment companies have toll-free numbers for assistance 24 hours a day. Carry these numbers with you.

Peritoneal dialysis away from home

Traveling is often easier for peritoneal dialysis patients because they are not dependent on the availability of a dialysis unit. Peritoneal dialysis patients still need to plan ahead and arrange for back-up medical care for their trips, as do hemodialysis patients. Typically, this would mean contacting a dialysis center in the area that provides home dialysis services and asking for the on-call, after hours number should a problem arise. The center may request a copy of your medical records in advance. In any case, you should always carry a copy of your records with you as well.

PD patients should carry enough supplies for the length of the trip, plus some extra supplies in case of problems. It is possible to arrange for delivery of supplies to your destination for longer stays. Make sure these supplies have arrived before you leave on your trip. PD patients also need to plan for adequate clean space where they may do their exchanges while traveling.

Traveling if you are active on a transplant waiting list

You should inform your transplant coordinator about your travel plans. The coordinator will help you decide whether to be “on hold” during the trip or whether you would be able to return within a reasonable amount of time if a kidney becomes available. Arrange to be contacted in the event a kidney becomes available.

Insurance during travel

If Medicare is your primary insurance coverage, Medicare will pay for 80 percent of your treatment costs within the U.S. and its territories. You will be responsible for the remaining 20 percent not covered by Medicare. If you have secondary insurance, it may cover this 20 percent. Check with the transient center about their policy on this. Most state Medicaid programs will not pay for treatment outside of your home state.

If you have commercial insurance as your primary insurance, you may need to request a letter from your insurance company stating they will pay for your treatment at the destination dialysis center. Some commercial insurance will pay for dialysis outside of the U.S. Transient dialysis centers will often call and verify this coverage themselves. Be sure to allow enough planning time to make these arrangements.

A doctor’s fee may also be charged by the transient dialysis center. Be sure to ask what portion of this charge will be your responsibility.

Don’t forget:

ALWAYS HAND CARRY ALL MEDICATIONS AND IMPORTANT HEALTH DOCUMENTATION WITH YOU.