Dialysis Cruising
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Whether you are on in-center hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or home hemodialysis, taking a cruise is an option for you. It takes a bit of planning, but what vacation doesn’t?

I have experienced several cruises that have offered services for dialysis patients. The treatments were performed in staterooms on the lower level of the ship, close to the infirmary.

We used a portable reverse osmosis machine attached to the water from the bathroom to provide the purified water needed for the dialysis treatments. We used jugged acid and bicarbonate solutions and a standard dialysis machine.

Your current doctor’s orders are followed for your estimated dry weight, dialysis bath, needle size, and treatment time.

The staff are well groomed in the machines and water systems and are required to have at least three years of experience in performing in-center dialysis.

Typically, the patient to staff ratio was two patients for every nurse or patient care technician. In addition, a nephrologist is assigned to round on each patient that is having in-center dialysis administered. If you are a home peritoneal dialysis patient or a home hemodialysis patient, you will not need to be seen by a nephrologist or nurse. Home patients typically will have their supplies delivered to the port to be loaded onboard and sent to their rooms.

You should always consult with your current health care team before deciding if you are stable enough to travel.

The company that you plan your cruise with will require medical information including, but not limited to, a current EKG, a current history and physical, most recent lab results, current medication list, three flow sheets, and a lab result for a Hbsag (hepatitis status) within six months of your sailing date.

It is recommended that you hand carry your last three treatment sheets, a copy of your latest lab results, and all medications you will need while away.

Unfortunately, Medicare and Medicaid have never covered dialysis cruise treatment costs, but some supplemental insurance companies will reimburse a percentage of the cost. I suggest you contact your insurance company to see if they will cover any of the cost before making your plans. You will have to deal with your insurance company as the dialysis cruise companies will not do that.

Your cruise coordinator will inform you of all requirements needed to travel.

With proper planning, there is no reason why being on dialysis should hold you back from traveling.

Happy travels, stay safe!!