

Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis, a process which filters blood outside the body, removes wastes and excess fluid. During a hemodialysis treatment, blood is removed from your body and pumped by a machine through a dialyzer. The dialyzer is the semipermeable membrane that cleans your blood.

While having your treatment, you sit or lie next to a hemodialysis machine. A nurse or technician puts two needles into a vein in your forearm called an access. One needle is connected to tubing, which takes your blood out of your body to be cleaned. The blood, after being filtered by the dialyzer, goes back into your body through tubing attached to the other needle. There is about one cup of blood outside your body at any time. All your blood is filtered through the dialyzer several times. At the end of treatment, your blood is returned to your body.

Putting the needles into your arm can cause a little discomfort. Dialysis does not hurt, although some people do feel nauseated or dizzy during parts of the treatment. Mostly, hemodialysis is a quiet time. During treatments, most people keep busy doing things like watching TV, reading or talking.



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Most people need hemodialysis three times a week. Each treatment lasts about four hours. You will be weighed before and after each treatment to make sure extra fluid is removed.

Most of the time, hemodialysis treatments are done in-center, which means they take place in a special clinic called a dialysis unit. Appointments must be scheduled in advance.

Home hemodialysis is another way to do hemodialysis. It frees you from the dialysis center schedule, but it requires a strong commitment from a partner who must be present during all dialysis treatments. You will need to have a machine and supplies in your home.

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