



Peritoneal dialysis



When kidneys can no longer work properly on their own, dialysis is needed to filter waste and extra water from the blood. There are a few types of dialysis and different locations where treatment can take place. One type of dialysis is *peritoneal dialysis (PD)*, which is done at home. Because the equipment is portable, PD can be done in nearly any other location as well.

We'll help you understand peritoneal dialysis and what happens during and after a treatment session so you can choose an approach that best suits your lifestyle and goals.

How peritoneal dialysis works

Before we get to how peritoneal dialysis works, let's talk about *hemodialysis*. In hemodialysis, blood is drawn out of your body and cleaned by a machine that filters wastes. But with peritoneal dialysis, this process happens inside your belly, where your abdominal lining (peritoneum) acts as a natural filter.

PD uses a fluid called *dialysate* to remove toxins and fluid from your blood. The dialysate is delivered to your abdomen through a *catheter* — a small soft tube that's surgically inserted through the abdominal wall.

After several hours in your abdomen — also known as the *dwell time* — the dialysate is drained back out through the catheter. It's then replaced by fresh dialysate. This cycle of filling and draining your abdomen with dialysate is called an *exchange*.



About fluid exchanges

There are two ways you can do fluid exchanges.

1. Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis

Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) means you do your dialysis by hand. To drain used dialysate, you connect an empty plastic bag to your catheter and let gravity draw the fluid out. Then you attach a new bag of dialysate — it's often hanging on an intravenous (IV) pole — to flow into your abdomen. With CAPD:

- You need to do fluid exchanges 4 times each day. You'll work with your health care team on the right schedule for you.
- Each fluid exchange takes about 30 to 40 minutes.
- You can do your dialysis almost anywhere that you're comfortable and is clean and dry.

2. Automated peritoneal dialysis

Automated peritoneal dialysis (APD) is done at night, while you're asleep. Your catheter is attached to tubing that's connected to a machine called a *cycler*. The cycler delivers and drains the fluid for you. Cyclers can fit on most bedside tables. With APD:

- The cycler does 3 to 5 fluid exchanges each night, over an 8- to 10-hour period
- You'll start each morning with fresh dialysate in your belly for the day
- If you're spending time away from home, you can take your machine with you or do your exchanges by hand while you're traveling



Before peritoneal dialysis

Starting *peritoneal dialysis (PD)* takes planning. Once you and your health care team decide it's a good fit, you'll need to:

Choose a dialysis partner

Although you can do PD on your own, it's a good idea to have a spouse, partner or close friend to help you on days when you aren't feeling well. You may also want to have someone who can help lift the bags of dialysate, which are usually five to six liters (that's between one to two gallons).

Complete dialysis training

You and your partner will learn how to do exchanges, help prevent infection, record your treatments in a log, and use your cyclor equipment, if you're planning to do *automated peritoneal dialysis (APD)*. The training program is held in a dialysis center with a dialysis nurse. People can learn how to do PD correctly in one to two weeks.¹

Prepare your home

Make sure you've got a clean, dry, well-lit place to do your dialysis and to store your supplies and equipment. Your dialysis room should be a pet-free zone, but it's OK to have pets elsewhere in your house.

Catheter surgery, recovery and care

To get a catheter placed in your abdomen for PD, you'll need to have minor surgery. This is usually done two to three weeks before you start PD to give your body time to heal.

Most people go home the same day they get their catheter. While you recover, it's important to keep the bandaged area around your catheter clean and dry. This means no showers for 10 to 14 days, or until you've healed. You'll also have to avoid certain exercises, such as sit-ups, for a couple weeks.

After you start dialysis, you need to clean your catheter area daily. You'll need to wear a face mask and wash your hands before and after you do the cleaning in order to help prevent infection.

Having a catheter means you won't be able to swim or soak in a tub. But it shouldn't get in the way of most everyday activities. A catheter is about the width of a pencil, so you can easily keep it tucked away under your clothes.

¹The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Peritoneal Dialysis. How do I Prepare for Peritoneal Dialysis? January 2018. Available at: [NIDDK.NIH.gov/health-information/kidney-disease/kidney-failure/peritoneal-dialysis#prepare](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/kidney-disease/kidney-failure/peritoneal-dialysis#prepare). Accessed November 11, 2020.



Life with peritoneal dialysis

It can take time to get used to *peritoneal dialysis (PD)*. In the beginning, it's normal to feel bloated or uncomfortable from the fluid in your abdomen. As a result, some people choose to wear looser clothing.

But overall, you'll likely feel better and more energized. This is because PD is done more often than in-center dialysis, so it cleans your blood more frequently.² You might also have fewer rules around eating and drinking than you would with in-center dialysis. However, because of the extra calories in the dialysate, you may have to follow a low-carbohydrate diet to avoid weight gain.

Many people find that PD makes it easier to work, travel and live the life they want.³ Talk to your doctor about whether PD is the right choice for you. You can use this pros and cons list as you think about it.

Things to consider with peritoneal dialysis

Pros

- You can do your treatments in the comfort of your own home.
- Your supplies are portable, so it's easier to travel.
- Your dialysis schedule can be more flexible.
- You're in charge of your own day-to-day care and have more control.
- There may be fewer rules around eating and drinking, compared to in-center dialysis.
- You may have more energy and enjoy a better quality of life.⁴

Cons

- You need a clean, dedicated space in your home to store supplies and a cyclor machine, if needed.
- You must invest the time in training and properly clean your catheter every day.
- You have a risk of getting an infection, so you need to be extra careful to keep your catheter clean and do the procedure correctly.
- You might experience bloating and weight gain from the dialysate.
- You'll have to avoid activities such as swimming and soaking in tubs.

²The National Kidney Foundation. Choosing a Treatment for Kidney Failure. 2013. Available at: [Kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-10-0352_choosing_treat.pdf](https://www.kidney.org/sites/default/files/11-10-0352_choosing_treat.pdf). Accessed November 11, 2020.

³The National Kidney Foundation. Peritoneal Dialysis: What You Need to Know. July 2, 2020. Available at: [Kidney.org/atoz/content/peritoneal](https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/peritoneal). Accessed November 11, 2020.

⁴Fadem SZ, Walker DR, Abbot G, et al. Satisfaction with renal replacement therapy and education: the American Association of Kidney Patients survey. *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*. 2011; 6: 3. doi:10.2215/CJN.06970810.



**It's always your choice which treatment you decide to choose.
Do what's best for you and your lifestyle, and work with your health
care team to choose the treatment that's right for you.**

All content is the property of CVS Health®. The information provided is not a substitute for the medical diagnosis, treatment and/or instructions provided by health care providers.

CVSKidneyCare.com

©2020 CVS Kidney Care, LLC. All rights reserved.
34.03.927.1 (12/20)
26-53186A 111220

