Arranging haemodialysis for when you go on holiday

Information for patients
Sheffield Kidney Institute (Renal Unit)
In this leaflet we explain how to arrange dialysis if you wish to go away on holiday or other travel, such as work. We also explain how to keep healthy while you are away.

We hope that we will have answered all your questions but if after reading this leaflet you want to know more, then please speak to:

- The Holiday Coordinator or the nurse at the unit where you have your dialysis
- Your Community Haemodialysis Nurse (if you have your dialysis at home)

Can I go on holiday?

You can go on holiday if:

- You have been having haemodialysis for at least six months.
- Your fistula, graft or dialysis line is working well.
- You don’t put on large amounts of weight between each dialysis.
- Your general health is good.
- Your Consultant has agreed that you are well enough to go on holiday.
- Your chosen holiday dialysis unit has agreed to treat you.

Where can I go on holiday?

There is a long list of places where you can have dialysis when you are on holiday. You can find the list in the holiday dialysis folder on each dialysis ward. Please ask a member of staff if you want to look at it. You can also get more information from:

- www.globaldialysis.com

If you are on the transplant list, you should be aware that you will be suspended from the list if you go abroad.
How do I arrange to have dialysis on holiday?

Before you book a holiday, including a hotel or any flights, your holiday dialysis must have been provisionally booked first.

Please note - you:

1. **Must** give 10 weeks' **notice** to make sure there is enough time to make all the arrangements.

2. Should check that dialysis is available for you **where** you want to go on holiday and **when** you want to go on holiday.

Some travel agencies have a special service for renal patients. They can book hotels, your travel and your dialysis e.g. Freedom Travel: you can call them on **01509 815999** or you can get more information from:

   - [www.freedomtravelholidays.com](http://www.freedomtravelholidays.com)

3. Must then fill in a Holiday Dialysis Request form - your dialysis nurse will give you a copy. The form needs to be sent to the Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator - we explain how to do this on the form. If you have any questions about the form, please ask your dialysis nurse when you come for your treatment.

The Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator will then make a **provisional** booking for your dialysis if it is available. You will be sent a letter telling you that the provisional booking has been made and you can then go ahead and book your hotel and any flights.

**You should be aware that some units have terms and conditions stating that they can cancel a booking for dialysis at any time.**
How often can I go on holiday?

There is no restriction on the number of times you can go on holiday, but you should be aware that:

- You must give 10 weeks' notice for each holiday.
- If you go on holiday for longer than 4 weeks, we may need to transfer your care to the local kidney doctor.

The length of time between coming back and going on holiday again depends on:

- Where you went on holiday.
- The risk category of the dialysis unit where you had your treatment.
- How long you may need to have dialysis in isolation to make sure you haven’t picked up an infection while you are away. (We explain more about this later).

If you take frequent holidays - for example to a caravan you own - please talk to the Holiday Haemodialysis Co-ordinator about this. We can then make sure that there is enough time to arrange another holiday and for you to have had the time you need in isolation.

Are there any risks to my health?

The main risk to your health is getting a serious infection, for example:

- Hepatitis B or C
- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). These are called blood borne viruses or BBV’s.
- MRSA (Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)
- CPE (Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae)

Hepatitis is a serious liver disease that can be life-threatening in some cases. Some patients don’t have any symptoms of the disease but
damage can still be happening to the body. The infection is only discovered when a blood test has been taken. Some people continue to carry the virus in their blood after any treatment. There is a risk of these patients developing liver cancer. There can also be a risk of passing on the virus to other patients, family members and staff.

We have other leaflets about **MRSA**. Please ask if you would like to read them.

**CPE** are a group of germs (bacteria) that have become very resistant to some antibiotics including those called carbapenems. The germs live in the gut of humans and animals without causing any harm - this is called being a carrier. These germs do cause harm if they get into the wrong place such as the bloodstream or urine for example, where they cause infection.

You may be at higher risk of becoming a carrier if you have had treatment abroad (including dialysis) or at a UK hospital which has patients carrying this germ.

On your return from holiday we will need to check if you have picked up CPE. We do this by taking a swab from your rectum (back passage) on 3 different occasions. We have a leaflet that explains CPE in more detail - please ask if you would like to read it.

**What if I'm on the kidney transplant list?**

If you are on the transplant list you will be suspended from the list if you travel abroad.

There are serious risks to your health if you get a blood borne virus when travelling abroad, and then have a kidney transplant. This means you will be suspended from the transplant list until we are sure you have not picked up a blood borne virus.
When you are back home, you must have further blood tests to make sure you have not been infected with a blood borne virus. These tests can take up to 3 months depending on where you have travelled.

You will be put back on the transplant list when the results of the blood borne virus tests are negative.

**What can be done to reduce my risk of getting an infection?**

The risk of getting a BBV depends on:

- What the dialysis unit does to stop the spread of infection.
- Whether patients with an infection are treated in a separate area or on separate machines.
- The rate of Hepatitis in the local community.
- Whether you have had a full course of Hepatitis B vaccinations and your body has developed enough antibodies to help fight the infection.

We have another leaflet "Hepatitis B and the Hepatitis B vaccination for renal patients". Please ask if you would like a copy or you can get a copy from:

[www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/patient-information/find-a-leaflet/search-for-a-leaflet](http://www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/patient-information/find-a-leaflet/search-for-a-leaflet)

Dialysis units are put into 3 groups:

- Low risk
- Medium risk
- High risk

Your risk of getting a BBV is low if you dialyse at a low risk unit and high if you dialyse at a high risk unit.
To help us put the dialysis units into groups we:

- get advice from the Infection Control Consultant at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Northern General Hospital)
- follow guidance from the Department of Health (2002 and 2010).

The information about the dialysis unit is seen by Matron who will decide with a Consultant:

- Whether it is safe for you to have your dialysis at that unit.
- Whether you will need to have your dialysis in a separate cubicle (isolation) after your holiday and for how long.
  - This **will be** for **one week** if you have been to an intermediate risk unit or **3 months** if you have been to a high risk unit.
  - The amount of time you have your dialysis in isolation will also depend on your blood test results.
  - You may have to move to another dialysis unit to have your treatment in an isolation cubicle. For example, if you usually dialyse at Chesterfield, you will have to move to Renal G Floor.

As we explained above, in many parts of the world, there is a risk of picking up types of bacteria (germs) that can’t be treated by most of the antibiotics that are available.

To help avoid picking up these bacteria, you **must**:

- **Wash your hands thoroughly** after using public toilets.
- **Use alcohol hand gel** – you can buy this from most supermarkets and chemists to take with you.
- Follow the advice below on **food and water safety** abroad:
  - Don't drink tap water or use it to brush your teeth. Use filtered or bottled water instead.
– Don't put ice in drinks.
– Bottled fizzy drinks with an unbroken seal are usually safe, and so are boiled water and hot drinks made with boiled water.
– Don't eat salads, uncooked fruits and vegetables unless you have washed and peeled them yourself.
– Don't eat food that has been kept at room temperature in warm environments, or that has been exposed to flies.
– Don't eat or drink unpasteurised milk, cheese, ice cream and other dairy products, or raw or undercooked seafood.

You can find out more about keeping well while travelling from:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/travelhealth/Pages/Travellersillnesses.aspx#water

**Do I need to have any tests?**

Before you go on holiday, you will need to have your blood tested for:

- Hepatitis B and C
- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

Depending on the results of your blood tests, you may need a Hepatitis B booster vaccine. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

You will also have some swabs taken to check you are not carrying MRSA on your skin. The number of swabs depends on where you are having your dialysis.

The Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator will arrange for these tests to be taken during one of your usual dialysis sessions. If you are a home haemodialysis patient, you will need to visit Sorby Renal Outpatients to have these tests taken.

Most holiday dialysis units will only let you have dialysis if all the results are negative.
Do I have to pay for my dialysis on holiday?

At the moment, dialysis is free in most renal units in Britain.

You can get a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) by filling in a form that you can get from a Post Office. You can also apply for a card online or by phone.

For holidays in Europe, dialysis is usually free if the unit accepts the EHIC. A list of units that accept the EHIC can be found in the holiday dialysis folder. The Holiday Coordinator will also have an up-to-date list of those units.

You can also get more information on the EHIC and other advice for travellers from:

- [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx)

The Department of Health


UK National Kidney Federation

- [www.kidney.org.uk](http://www.kidney.org.uk)

Renal units abroad will **not** give you transport to and from your dialysis treatment when you are on holiday.

If you have transport to and from your dialysis treatment and you are having holiday dialysis in **England**, you **may** be eligible for transport on holiday.
Do I need travel insurance?

Yes, you must have travel insurance. There are some times when your EHIC would not cover your dialysis treatment; for example, you become ill and need to have dialysis longer than planned. In some cases, travel insurance can be expensive. The Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator can discuss this with you in more detail.

Do I need to take anything with me on holiday?

You may need to take the following things with you:

- Blood and MRSA test results.
- Dialysis equipment or medication the unit has asked you to bring (for example, needles / dialyser).
- Any instructions about your dialysis treatment.
- Your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) - for holidays abroad.
- Details of how to contact your Renal Unit and the Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator (the details are at the end of this leaflet).

The Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator and dialysis nurse will help you make sure you have everything you need for your dialysis treatment before you go on holiday.

What about my medicines while I am away?

Please remember, you need to carry on taking your tablets and other medicines just like you do at home.

- Make sure you have enough to last the whole time you are away on holiday and some extra for emergencies.
- You should also take a copy of your prescription with you.
- Keep your medicines in the packets as this shows that they have been prescribed for you.
• Keep the patient information sheet in the packet. This is especially important if you are going abroad as the doctor may not be familiar with the brand or name of the medicines that we use in the UK.
• If you are travelling by plane, keep your medicines in your hand luggage so they are less likely to go missing. These should be carried in clear plastic bags.
• If you need equipment such as needles and syringes you should tell the check-in staff and when going through security. Any equipment carried as hand luggage should also be kept in a clear plastic bag.
• A letter from your doctor to show Customs Officers as they may want to know about the equipment and medicines you have with you. Keep this with you while you travel.
• You may also need to take your EPO and iron with you as well, especially if you are going away for a longer time. Your consultant and the holiday coordinator will discuss this with you.

You **must** carry on following the advice given to you by the renal dietitian and keep to your fluid allowance. It can be more difficult to keep to your fluid allowance in the hot weather so you may need to be more careful to stop yourself becoming overloaded with fluid.

**What happens if I need to cancel my holiday?**

You **must** let the Holiday Coordinator know **straight away** so that the holiday dialysis can be cancelled.

It is important to remember that **you may still have to pay for the dialysis** treatment even though you will not be having it. This is most likely if the unit where you were due to have dialysis does not accept the EHIC.

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Sheffield Kidney Institute have a duty to tell you if we think you are not fit and well
enough to travel. We also have a responsibility to tell the unit where you will be dialysing that we feel you are not well enough to go on holiday. If this is the case, the holiday dialysis unit has the right to **not** accept you for treatment until your doctor says you are fit and well enough to travel on holiday.

**What happens when I come back from holiday?**

When you come back from your holiday, you will need to have your blood tested for:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV (in some cases)

You may need these tests regularly for up to 3 months depending on where you have had your dialysis.

Your name may need to be **removed** from the transplant list until the results of the blood borne viruses blood tests are negative. This depends on where you had your holiday dialysis and the risk of getting an infection there. Again, this could be for 3 months.

- You will have swabs taken to check for MRSA on your skin.
- You may have some swabs taken from your rectum (back passage) to check for CPE. This will depend on where you have dialysed on holiday.

You may also need to dialyse in isolation when you get back from holiday, depending on where you had your holiday dialysis treatment. This may mean that we have to change your usual days, times and dialysis unit while you need isolation. The Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator will confirm this with you before you go away on holiday.
When you get back from holiday, you must tell the nurses:

- If you were admitted to a hospital
- If you had any surgery or treatment from a dentist
- If you had a blood transfusion

If this has happened, you may need to have your dialysis in isolation for 3 months.

**If you are a Home Haemodialysis patient:**

- Please arrange your first set of blood tests and swabs with the Home Haemodialysis nurse(s) and the Renal Assessment Unit before you go on holiday.
- If you need more blood tests after that (for example you have been to an intermediate or high risk dialysis unit), you **must** come to the Renal Assessment Unit either:
  - to have the blood taken **or**
  - bring the blood samples you have taken at home.

If we **do not** receive the blood samples:

- Your name can’t go back on the transplant list.
- If you have picked up an infection, it may take longer until you get any treatment you need.
- You can carry on having your dialysis at home. If for some reason you need to come to the hospital for your dialysis or are admitted to a ward, you may need to have your treatment in isolation.
Contact details

Renal Holiday Haemodialysis Coordinator

- **0114 305 2493**
  Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 08.30 am - 1.30 pm

Peter Moorhead Dialysis Unit (Northern General Hospital)

- **0114 271 5136**
- **0114 271 5158**
  Sunday to Friday, 7.00am - 9.00pm

Renal G Floor (Northern General Hospital)

- **0114 226 9481**
  Monday to Saturday, 7.00am - 9.00pm

Barnsley Dialysis Unit

- **01226 434 910**
  Monday to Saturday, 7.00am - 9.00pm

Chesterfield Dialysis Unit

- **01246 512 626**
  Monday to Saturday, 7.00am - 9.00pm

Rotherham Dialysis Unit

- **01709 838 333**
  Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7.00am - 9.00pm
  Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 7.00am - 12 midday

Sheffield Dialysis Centre

- **0114 229 0970**
  Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7.00am - 6.30pm
  Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday 7.00am - 6.30pm
Home Haemodialysis Team

- **0114 271 4796**
  Monday to Friday 7.00am - 3.00pm