



## Tips for a good Hemodialysis treatment

By Yvonne Schoonover

**Control your blood pressure:** keeping your blood pressure at a safe level, between 130/80 and 140/40 is better for your heart and also helps to keep you from cramping. Cramping is sometimes caused by a large drop in blood pressure during treatment. Sometimes the doctor or nurse practitioner will ask you to take some or all of your blood pressure pills before coming to dialysis to keep your blood pressure from getting too high. Blood pressure changes with each treatment and you may need more or fewer blood pressure pills than you were taking before starting dialysis. This is very individual and hard to predict.

**Watch your fluid intake between treatments:** when the kidneys are not working, you cannot get rid of the fluid that you drink. Fluid is removed from the blood and must shift from the tissues into the bloodstream. We are only able to remove a certain amount of fluid during a 4 hour dialysis treatment. If you drink too much fluid, we have to remove more fluid in the same period of time and this can cause a drop in blood pressure, cramping or both. Both of these are bad for your heart. Limiting the amount of fluid you drink to 1 liter per day on average is optimal for being able to remove all fluid during your treatment.

**Plan your meals and diabetes medication around your treatment:** if your treatment is going to conflict with getting a regularly scheduled meal and you take insulin or diabetes medication, you will probably need to bring a lunch or snack with you to eat while you are on treatment to prevent a drop in blood sugar. If you are eating something that is high in phosphorus, remember to bring your phosphorus binder medication with you.

**Bring a blanket or dress a little warmer:** taking the blood out of the body, filtering it and returning it to the body often makes a person cold. The dialysis fluid is kept warm at body temperature, but the blood is not warmed. Also the dialysis units often have cold spots whether in summer or winter. The staff will do their best to regulate the temperature to a comfortable level for all. Some chairs have heaters built in, but not all units have these.

**Bring a book to read or plan to watch TV during your treatment:** your treatment will typically last 3-4 hours and this will help to pass the time.

### How to contact us

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