

Automated Peritoneal Dialysis

To hear Sharon Erdmann tell it, she has a good life, filled with family and friends. Looking at her, you would never guess that 3 years ago she was in intensive care after a week of being sick to her stomach.

"They finally came back and said we know what the problem is your creatinine is 10. And I said OK? And they said well it's supposed to be 1. You are in kidney failure." – Sharon, Patient

Sharon needed dialysis. At first, she tried hemodialysis at a clinic 3 times a week - but it just wasn't for her.

"Doing hemodialysis you're really tired afterwards. And at that time I was still working. So I would go to haemodialysis for the three hours from 5:30 till 8:30 and then I'd go grab some breakfast somewhere and be to work by 10:00 and then I'd work till 4 and get home at 5. It was a 12 hour day and I was dragging."
– Sharon, Patient

So Sharon and her doctor decided to try automated peritoneal dialysis, or APD.

"You know I could do it at home, in the comfort of the warmth of my home and my bed and that's that was the biggest thing for me." – Sharon, Patient

Unlike hemodialysis, where an artificial kidney machine cleans the blood, 3 times a week at a clinic; automated peritoneal dialysis cleans your blood inside your body at home, every night while you sleep.

"Sometimes people like to sleep on certain sides or on their back. So each patient is a little different but most patients that do this for long periods of time, which is most people that do it, find a nice comfortable position to be in. It can be uncomfortable but most people sleep right through the procedure."
– Dr. Aaron Dall Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

In Automated Peritoneal Dialysis, the blood is filtered through the lining in your abdomen, called the peritoneum, with the help of a machine, or cyclor. A special cleaning solution, dialysate, is emptied into your abdomen through a tube near your belly button. Several times a night as you sleep, usually for 7-10 hours, the dialysate slowly removes the waste products from your blood and the cyclor disposes of them.

"And after it releases that fluid, it fills your belly up with another amount of fluid."
– Dr. Aaron Dall Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

The process of filling and then draining the dialysis fluid is called an exchange. The APD cyclor will do several exchanges while you sleep that last anywhere from about an hour to hour and a half. The number of exchanges depends on the patient.

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"The only thing you just have to get used to is you have this 25 foot it's like aquarium tubing. It's not like a big garden hose or anything, you know. And you can roll over in bed and on occasion you might get a kink in it if you're laying on it funny and the machine will beep. And so then you know that something's going wrong and you just roll over and then you're good to go again." – Sharon, Patient

It's also important to take good care of your catheter, the tube in your abdomen where you connect the cyclor.

"It's keeping it clean, it's keeping the skin clean around the catheter. We oftentimes have our patients use a little antibiotic ointment around that area." – Dr. Aaron Dall Nephrologist/Kidney Specialist

"The little known secret, if you will, of dialysis is more is better. And if you could see your way to doing home hemo or home peritoneal, you'll do better." – Dr. Allan Roza Kidney Transplant Surgeon

"It's like brushing your teeth before you go to bed. It's you know you just get used to doing it and it's not a big deal." – Sharon, Patient

If you think peritoneal dialysis might be right for you, talk to your healthcare team.