



Dialysis



Overview

This artificial filtering of your blood removes waste from your body. It helps perform the job that your kidneys are supposed to do. If your kidneys don't function properly, dialysis may be a necessary part of your life. Two methods of dialysis treatments are commonly available.

Hemodialysis

One method, called "hemodialysis," is usually done at a clinic or a hospital. With this technique, a machine called a "hemodialyzer" cleanses your blood. Your blood can be accessed through a plastic port placed in a vein in your neck. Or, a permanent port can be created in your body by modifying large blood vessels in your forearm or leg. Your blood is withdrawn from your body. It passes through the machine, which removes the waste. The cleansed blood is continuously pumped back into your body. The process usually takes several hours. It must be done three times each week.

Peritoneal Dialysis

The other method, called "peritoneal dialysis," can be done at home. With this method, you cleanse your blood while it is still in your body through a catheter placed in your abdomen. You introduce a liquid called "dialysate fluid" through this port. The fluid fills the space around your organs. It draws waste and fluid from the blood vessels in your abdomen. Then, it is drained back out of your body and discarded. You can do this several times each day using bags of dialysate fluid. Or, when you go to bed you can connect to a machine called a "cycler." It cycles dialysate fluid into and out of your abdomen every night while you sleep.

Conclusion

Dialysis can significantly impact your life. It requires scheduling and special equipment. And while you are on dialysis, you may need to make changes to your diet and to your activities. But as you become familiar with the process, dialysis can become a normal part of your daily routine.