

Information for Hemodialysis Patients: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated September 27, 2021

The last several months have brought change and uncertainty for everyone due to COVID-19. We understand this may create additional concerns, fears and questions as you wonder, what does this mean for you?

We continue to make changes in our hemodialysis units to protect you and our staff from COVID-19. This pamphlet provides an update on these changes. Please feel free to discuss your questions with your hemodialysis team.

1. Why are my care providers all wearing masks?

Experts recommend that all health care providers wear masks in order to protect patients, as well as each other in the hospital setting. This is because wearing a mask prevents the spread of COVID-19 infection.

2. What should I do if I have or have had recent close contact with a family member or friend who has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Please call your dialysis unit and let them know that you have had contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Your dialysis unit will then follow guidelines that are in place to keep everyone in the unit safe. This might mean that you will have your dialysis in a different spot in your unit, another dialysis unit or have your schedule changed. This will be **temporary** until we have made sure you are well.

You **must** self-isolate when you go back home in between dialysis sessions. This means not having close contact with other people (even with people in your own home) and not going anywhere except for dialysis. You will need to self-isolate for 14 days while we monitor you for any symptoms of COVID-19.

3. Should I still come for my dialysis treatment if I feel sick?

Yes, BUT you need to call the dialysis unit first to let us know about your illness and symptoms, so we can take care of you properly. If you become very sick, you may need to be admitted to the hospital to be cared for.

4. Will I still receive dialysis if my long-term care home or community in which I live has an outbreak?

Yes. How you travel to the dialysis unit, as well as your dialysis schedule and the precautions used when providing your care, may be changed temporarily during this time. This will be discussed in partnership with you, your family and your care home.

5. Can my family member/friend come into the unit while I am having dialysis?

In order to keep you, other patients, and our staff safe, visitors/family members are NOT allowed to stay with patients during hemodialysis runs, unless medically necessary. Drop off and pick up is allowed from the waiting room or other area(s) designated by the hemodialysis unit staff.

Visiting with family or friends during hemodialysis is important for many patients. We look forward to welcoming visitors back to the unit when safe and appropriate. Your hemodialysis team will update you as their guidance changes.

6. Why is my dialysis schedule being changed?

For everyone's safety and to ensure proper physical distancing, patients schedules may be different and staggered. We want to make sure that patients who are sick do not come in close contact with others. We thank you and your families for your flexibility, as we work hard to ensure everyone's safety.

7. Do I need to wear a mask?

Everyone is required to wear a mask while walking through public areas on your way to dialysis, when in common areas such as the waiting room or hallway and when on dialysis (except when eating or drinking). Refer to http://www.bcrenal.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Hemodialysis_Patients-Mask_Posters.pdf for key points on wearing masks.

Using a mask is not enough and needs to be combined with other preventative measures such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing, where possible.

8. Why are we being asked to take alternate means of transportation?

Your safety and protection is paramount. You may be asked to change your way of getting to the dialysis unit to help with physical distancing. HandyDART continues to operate and uses COVID-19 safety measures. If you have any questions about HandyDART or to modify your schedule, please contact them directly.

9. Are there any patients that have COVID-19 in this dialysis unit?

There is information available to the public on rate of COVID positive patients on the BCCDC website (www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data). However, to protect confidentiality, we are not able to share specific information about dialysis patients. Please be reassured that we are taking precautions to ensure those who are sick do not transmit infection to others in the dialysis unit.

10. Why is advanced care planning important during COVID-19?

Advanced care planning may seem scary or daunting, but it can also make you feel calm and comforted knowing you have plans in place for yourself and your family should things change with your health. Advanced care planning can include planning financial affairs with family,

determining who should make health care decisions on your behalf, and can also include creating a will. You can speak to the social worker on the unit for further details about this.

Additional Resources

Learn about COVID-19

- www.healthlinkbc.ca or call 8-1-1 any time of day for health information and resources
- www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19

Learn the latest on COVID-19 vaccinations:

- www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine

Support during COVID-19 pandemic

- <https://online.bouncebackonline.ca>: free, self-directed course from the Canadian Mental Health Association to help people manage low mood, stress, and anxiety
- www.anxietycanada.com: information and self-management strategies for anxiety
- www.selfmanagementbc.ca: self-management resources and support
- www.indigenousclimateaction.com/entries/covid19-resources-for-indigenous-peoples?rq=covid (COVID-19 resources for Indigenous Peoples)
- www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation: resources for people who are self-isolating

Funding support:

- www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices.html
- www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html

It is completely normal to feel isolated and fearful during this time. If you are feeling scared, reach out to a health care member at your hemodialysis unit and they can ensure that you receive support.