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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health  
BC Renal Agency

### **B.C. INVESTS \$4.3M IN LIFE-SAVING KIDNEY EQUIPMENT**

VICTORIA – Patients in British Columbia with chronic kidney disease will benefit from a \$4.3-million capital investment this year in medical equipment to help manage their condition, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

“Patients with kidney disease in British Columbia have some of the best outcomes in the country and a broad range of care options,” said Abbott. “With this funding, we are increasing the capacity for treatment and ensuring that those British Columbians affected by kidney disease have access to critical health-care services within a reasonable distance of their homes.”

The 2007/2008 funding for new renal care equipment throughout B.C. includes:

- Thirteen new dialysis machines to deliver additional dialysis sessions to kidney patients;
- Sixty-one replacement reverse osmosis and dialysis machines to increase treatment capacity and care as the new machines require less downtime; and
- Forty-nine new machines for independent dialysis, allowing 49 patients to receive care at home;

“Dialysis machines are true lifesavers for the over 1,900 British Columbians who require regular kidney hemodialysis,” said Dr. Adeera Levin, executive director of the B.C. Provincial Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. “Providing funding for home dialysis machines is also key because it provides flexibility in care and allows many patients to benefit from additional hours of dialysis.”

Kidneys are essential to our overall health and they perform a number of important functions, including controlling fluid balance in the body, removing waste products from the blood and regulating blood pressure. Many people can function normally with only one kidney, but often both kidneys begin to fail at the same time.

An estimated 145,000 British Columbian are affected by some form of kidney disease. In the later stages of the disease, the kidneys may stop functioning completely, leaving dialysis or a kidney transplant as the only options for survival.

Early diagnosis and medical treatment are essential in order to achieve the best patient outcomes, as changes to diet or medication can slow or even stop the progress of kidney disease. In the early stages of kidney disease, many individuals experience no symptoms but some common early symptoms of kidney disease include: foamy or bloody urine; a frequent need to urinate at night; headaches; and puffy eyes or ankles.

Since 2001, B.C. has increased the number of hospital, clinic and home-based dialysis stations by 66 per cent in 18 communities across the province. In 2003, B.C. launched a provincewide early detection strategy for kidney disease. This initiative was the first of its kind in North America and British Columbians with chronic kidney disease are now being diagnosed 15 per cent earlier.

In B.C., regional health authorities are responsible for dialysis care to patients. The B.C. Provincial Renal Agency plans and co-ordinates kidney care throughout the province for those affected by kidney disease.

British Columbians can learn more about kidney disease and renal care through the BC HealthGuide program. The HealthGuide is available online at [www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org) or by calling the BC NurseLine at 604 215-4700 within Greater Vancouver or toll-free at 1-866-215-4700 elsewhere in B.C.

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