

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

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The last few weeks/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 the hemodialysis unit 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 now?

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 has an outbreak?

Yes. How you travel to the dialysis unit, as well as your dialysis schedule, 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. The policy to restrict visitors to hospitals is under constant review by the BC Ministry of Health/Health Authorities. 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. Why can you not provide us with a mask?

The experts have asked us to provide masks only for patients with symptoms and who are not well. You are welcome to bring your own non-medical (e.g., cloth) mask to wear during dialysis. This may help to protect those around you. Information about non-medical masks and how to clean and dispose of them can be found at www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks.

Using a mask is not enough and needs to be combined with other preventative measures such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing. Learn more at [www.bcrenalagency.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/novel-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/novel-coronavirus-(covid-19)).

8. Why do we need physical distancing when I am NOT sick and do not have the virus?

The Medical Health Officer (Dr. Bonnie Henry) has asked EVERYONE to practice physical distancing (previously referred to as social distancing) at all times, whether you are sick or not. If you would like more information about physical distancing, please ask the staff for a handout (or go to [www.bcrenalagency.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/novel-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/novel-coronavirus-(covid-19))). The handouts are available in English, Punjabi and Cantonese.

9. 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. Currently HandyDART is still running and is practicing safe cleaning and distancing. If you have any questions about HandyDART or to modify your schedule, please contact them directly.

10. 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. 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.

11. 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 about COVID-19 for Hemodialysis Patients

Where can I find support and resources during the COVID-19 pandemic?

While it is important to maintain **physical** distance, it is also important to maintain being social via social media, group chats, internet and phone calls with family and friends.

Healthy Coping Ideas:

- Eat well balanced meals
- Contact family or friends virtually/phone/snail mail, meditate (even if it's for 2 minutes)
- Gratitude journal
- Practice deep breathing
- Listen to music
- Increase physical activity
- Limit upsetting media coverage
- Do something kind
- Spend time in nature
- Dance, dance, dance!
- Make a new recipe
- Read a book
- Explore self-management strategies like mindfulness, yoga, meditation, art, exercise to manage anxious thoughts. You can find self-management strategies for anxiety from Anxiety Canada at www.anxietycanada.com.
- You can also take the Bounce Back Online, a self-directed course from the Canadian Mental Health Association to help people manage low mood, stress, and anxiety. The online version is available for free, no referral needed. Visit online.bouncebackonline.ca.

In addition to the resource above, check out the following:

- Visit www.anxietycanada.com for information and self-management strategies for anxiety
- Visit www.selfmanagementbc.ca for support self-management resources and support
- Visit www.healthlinkbc.ca or call 8-1-1 any time of day for health information and resources
- Visit www.flattenthecurve.com for plain language information on reducing the impact of coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness at home and in your community (this resource uses US examples)

Resources for individuals who are self-isolating:

<https://www.covidhelper.org/>

<https://coda.io/@awsamuel/vancouver-mutual-aid>

Indigenous Client Action Agency has a guidebook for COVID-19:

<https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/entries?tag=COVID-19>

As well as anxiety, COVID-19 is causing many financial stressors. Below is a list of benefit programs that offer funding during this crisis:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

Povnet: Special Resources: (including banks, BC Hydro & phone companies)

<https://www.povnet.org/covid19-special-resources>

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 the Renal program and they can ensure that you receive support.

Adapted from a pamphlet developed by the team at Vancouver General Hospital, with appreciation