

HEMODIALYSIS AND TRAVELLING

FOR PATIENTS LIVING OUTSIDE BRITISH COLUMBIA WHO WANT TO TRAVEL TO BC

Thank you for your interest in booking hemodialysis during your visit to British Columbia (BC). This is a step-by-step guide to help you plan your dialysis care away from home.

We accept visiting patients in our dialysis units who:

- Have been told by their kidney doctor (nephrologist) that they can travel
- Are medically stable on hemodialysis
- Have a functioning fistula, graft or permanent central line catheter with stable blood flows.
 - Temporary accesses are not accepted.
 - If the fistula is accessed using the buttonhole method, the patient must be able to self-cannulate or have a caregiver with them to cannulate it. Nurses do not cannulate buttonholes.
- Have medical and dialysis needs we feel we can meet.

Once the BC dialysis unit you chose confirms they can accept you, staff will coordinate your treatment with your home dialysis unit.

Please plan your travel well in advance. Contact your preferred dialysis unit in BC **at least 3 months** before you wish to travel (the further ahead, the better).

DO NOT BOOK YOUR TRAVEL UNTIL THE BC DIALYSIS UNIT TELLS YOU IT IS OK.

Here are the steps to follow:

1. Check with your kidney doctor to make sure you are fit to travel.
2. Once you decide where you want to go in BC, find a dialysis unit that is nearby.

Go to the Kidney Services page on www.bcrenalagency.ca for a list of dialysis units in BC. The website has contact information for visiting patients.

3. Call the dialysis unit you want to visit to see if there is space on your desired dates. **DO NOT book your travel until the BC dialysis unit tells you it is OK.** The BC unit must make sure they have space and they can meet your medical and dialysis needs. It is recommended that you buy travel insurance (see point #12).
4. Ask about the cost of dialysis and other medical appointments, tests or treatments.

Canadian residents: Provincial health insurance from your home province should cover most physician and dialysis costs when travelling in Canada. There may be exceptions, so it is important to check within your province. More information can be found at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/medi-assur/faq-eng.php>.

Non-Canadian residents: You **MUST** pay upfront for:

- Hemodialysis and other medical appointments, tests and treatments.
- Kidney doctor:
 - Care provided by your kidney doctor during your hemodialysis runs.
 - Appointment to see a BC kidney doctor prior to your first dialysis run, if required.

Ask the BC dialysis unit about where and when you must pay.

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- 5. The BC unit will contact your home unit for your medical documents. Your home unit will arrange additional tests or appointments, if needed.
 - 6. The BC dialysis unit will review your medical documents. They will let you know if they can meet your medical and dialysis needs and if space is available. **ONCE THEY HAVE CONTACTED YOU, YOU MAY CONFIRM YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.**
 - 7. Give your travel dates to the nurse-in-charge and the social worker at your home unit. Your home unit and the BC unit will coordinate your last day of dialysis before your trip and also your return dialysis date.
 - 8. Talk to your pharmacy to make sure you will have enough medication while you travel.
 - Bring all medications you will need with you. This includes injectable and intravenous medications such as erythropoiesis stimulating agents [e.g., erythropoietin (EPO) and darbepoetin (Aranesp)], iron and low molecular weight heparin.
 - Erythropoiesis stimulating agents must be kept cool (2 to 8 degrees Celsius). Talk to your pharmacist about the best way to keep the medication at the right temperature.
 - If you use EMLA or another cream to numb your skin prior to needling, bring it with you. If you have lidocaine or another local anesthetic injected under your skin, check with the visiting unit if you need to bring your own.
 - Ask your home dialysis unit to give you a letter so you can go through security with your syringes and medications (a standard letter is available at www.bcrenalagency.ca for you to print and ask your kidney doctor to sign).
 - 9. If you have special requirements for, sensitivities or allergies to specific dialysis products, check with the visiting unit if you need to bring your own. Examples include:
 - Dialyzers (you will need enough for each treatment plus a few spares)
 - Dialysis needles (you will need enough for each treatment plus a few spares)
 - 10. If you are unable to speak English, plan to bring a translator to your visiting dialysis unit for the first run or two.
 - 11. Please be flexible. The BC dialysis unit will make every effort to accommodate your request. But they may need to change the time or location of your treatment. We must consider the needs of many patients. You will be notified in advance if any change is needed.
 - 12. It is recommended that you buy travel insurance. Make sure your insurance covers medical evacuation. If you have a medical emergency and require health care outside Canada or need to be transported back home, the financial costs may be extremely high.
 - 13. A few important points about reimbursement:
 - Save all of your medical receipts. You will need to submit them with your reimbursement forms to your health insurance plan.
 - There may be a time limit to seek reimbursement. Check with your insurance plan.
- If you have questions, talk to the staff on your home dialysis unit.
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- The information in this pamphlet is provided for educational/information purposes, and to support discussion with your health care team about your medical condition and treatment. It does not constitute medical advice and should not substitute for advice given by your physician or other qualified health care professional.