

How you can help with peritoneal dialysis treatments

There are quite a few advantages to peritoneal dialysis (PD) and a few things to remember too. If the person you care for has chosen PD, they will likely be doing their treatments, called “exchanges,” by themselves. However, as their care partner you’ll want to know if they would appreciate some help.



Cleanliness is key

A clean treatment area, use of aseptic technique throughout the PD procedures, and ensuring the PD supplies do not get contaminated can help ensure a safe treatment. PD requires a catheter, or tube, in the abdomen to fill and drain PD solution (the liquid that cleans the blood) during each exchange, so it is vital to keep the exit site and catheter clean. You will both learn about these topics during the PD training program, and the PD nurse will offer any needed assistance.



Be the timekeeper

Whether the person you care for does their exchange process manually or by using a PD cycler overnight, it helps if they stay on a schedule and do the full treatment. Missing a treatment can lead to short and long-term consequences. Make sure they know when it’s time for an exchange.



Know their numbers

To ensure they are getting enough dialysis to effectively filter their blood and remove fluid, the person you care for will periodically collect their urine and used PD solution over a 24-hour period to submit for testing during a center visit. They will also have blood samples taken at the center for testing as well. If they have diabetes, they will also need to test their blood sugar as prescribed by their physician. As their care partner, it’s a good idea to keep track of their lab results so you can share them with their doctor or nurse during follow-up appointments at the center.



Encourage healthy eating

One advantage of PD is that the person you care for may be less restricted in what they can eat than with other types of dialysis. But that doesn't mean it will be a feast every day. You can help them stay as healthy as possible by working with the dietitian at the center to come up with a kidney-friendly meal plan they'll find tasty and satisfying.



Make some space—and a plan

For PD treatments, keep your supplies in a clean, dry room that feels comfortable—not too hot or cold. Keep pets away to keep everything safe and help your treatment work well. Along with the PD nurse, you and the person you care for should decide the best place to keep it all. Also make sure you are always prepared and have enough supplies on hand in case of an emergency. This usually includes an additional 5 to 7 days of treatment supplies.



Staying active is important

Studies show that people on dialysis do better when they move around and stay active when not performing treatments. In fact, so will you. Go for a walk with the person you care for as often as possible. Encourage them to stay engaged with their work or hobbies. As always, check with their kidney doctor before encouraging them to start a new exercise routine.



Take time for yourself

Being a care partner for someone can be challenging, emotionally and physically. Going to the movies or visiting with friends is a great way to relax and refresh. Having someone to talk to can also help you express how you're feeling and may lower your stress level.



Keep important information with you

You want to be sure that you have the patient's medical information written down, including all medications and the names of all of their doctors. Always keep this information with you so you can be prepared for an emergency.