Dialysis Patients: Being Prepared for an Emergency

My numbers to call in an emergency:

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Capital Health
Dialysis Patients:

Being Prepared for an Emergency

This pamphlet is for patients receiving hemodialysis in the in-centre dialysis unit, a satellite dialysis unit, or receiving peritoneal dialysis (PD) or hemodialysis in their own homes.

The following information will be helpful in case of emergencies such as snow storms, long power outages or other natural disasters. We will cover what precautions to take, what you should do while you can’t get your usual treatment, and who to contact if this type of situation happens.

It is important that your dialysis unit has your correct contact information and an alternate phone number in case we need to reach you.

What do we mean by an ‘emergency’?

• Not being able to start or finish your dialysis treatment in your home because of a long power outage (this can be hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis with the cycler).

• Not being able to make it to your dialysis treatment (in-centre or at a satellite unit) due to a storm or other natural disaster.
Who should I contact if I can’t make it to dialysis or do dialysis at home?

• Call the dialysis unit where you receive your hemodialysis treatment.
• If you are a home patient, call the home dialysis unit.

Write your dialysis unit or home dialysis unit phone number on the front of this pamphlet. Keep it handy.

What precautions should I take in the event of an emergency?

• Limit the amount of fluid you are drinking. This includes anything that is liquid at room temperature, such as ice cream or Jell-O® that would melt at room temperature.
• Limit the amount of salt and potassium you eat in your food. Watch your diet carefully.
• If a snow storm is coming, try to make arrangements to stay closer to your dialysis centre.
• If you are doing your own dialysis at home, try to do your treatment before the storm starts if at all possible.

PD cycler patients:

• Do not use a generator to run your cycler.
• Turn off your cycler machine and unplug it.
• Switch to twin bag exchanges during the power outage if you have been taught how to use them and you have the supplies at home.
• Remember to call the home dialysis nurse or on-call nurse if you have any questions or concerns.
Home hemodialysis patients:
• Unplug your dialysis machine and water treatment system if you think the power may go out. **Do not plug the machine or system back in until after the power is back on.**
• **Do not use a generator to run your dialysis machine or water treatment system.**
• Once power is restored, disinfect the machine before your next dialysis treatment.
• *If it has been longer than 72 hours* since the machine was used, disinfect both the machine and the water treatment system before doing dialysis.
• Remember to call the home dialysis nurse or on-call nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Are there any medications I should take if I can’t have my dialysis treatment?
• You will get a prescription for Kayexalate®. It is important to get this prescription filled and have it on hand in case you need to use it. Make a note of when your supply expires and get it re-filled as needed.
• **Do not take this medication unless the hemodialysis staff tells you to.**
• Kayexalate® is a drug used to treat high potassium levels in the blood. If not treated, high potassium levels may lead to an irregular heart beat or cause problems with muscles and nerves.
• When you report to the dialysis unit or home dialysis unit that you can’t come in for your dialysis treatment or do your dialysis at home, your nurse or physician will tell you if you should take your Kayexalate®.

• Remember, Kayexalate® should be mixed with half a cup (4 ounces) of water.

**Common questions**

**How can I manage my fluid intake?**

• Remember your fluid restrictions:
  › For hemodialysis patients: 2 cups plus what you put out in urine in the last 24 hours.
  › For PD patients: 4 cups plus what you put out in urine in the last 24 hours.

**When should I take my Kayexalate®?**

• One of the nurses or physicians will call you to advise you if and when you should take your Kayexalate®. Wait until you are told to take it.

**How do I find out if my dialysis unit will be open in the event of a storm?**

• For satellite dialysis patients: the satellite dialysis unit nurse or the home dialysis unit nurse will notify you if your unit is closed or will close early.

• For in-centre dialysis (Halifax) patients: the in-centre hemo nurse will call you or you can call 902-473-7544.
How and when will I be notified if the unit will not open, or closes early?

• If we must close, we will do our best to contact you directly as soon as possible.

If the unit does close, when and where will I get my dialysis treatment?

• For satellite dialysis patients: we will do our best to keep you in your own satellite.
• It may be necessary to change the time and/or day of your treatment temporarily.
• It may also be necessary for you to have your treatment in Halifax once it is safe to do so.

What should I do if I miss a dialysis treatment and I am feeling short of breath?

• You should always watch your diet and limit your fluid and salt intake when it looks like you might miss your dialysis treatment.
• If you get very short of breath, go to your local Emergency Department.

If there is a long power outage, what should I do about my Aranesp®?

• If your power has been out for more than 12 hours, check with your local pharmacy or hospital pharmacy to see if they will refrigerate your Aranesp® for you during the power outage. You can also take it to a friend or family member who has power to refrigerate.