

ESRD FAQ

Some questions to ask when choosing a dialysis center:

- ***Is the staff friendly, welcoming, and trained in service excellence?***

A kind, encouraging, friendly staff can help you do better.

- ***Is the center clean?***

Infection control and pride in the center show in a center's appearance.

- ***How often or when will I see my nephrologist?***

Your doctor should see you at least once a month in the center or his/her office.

- ***How does the center protect patient safety?***

The center should take steps to protect patients and visitors from infections, injuries, and crime.

- ***If I choose hemodialysis, will the center schedule my treatments around my work schedule?***

Keeping your job means having a more normal life and, often, better insurance. Your treatments should allow you to work.

- ***Is there flexibility in scheduling?***

If you have a key meeting or special event, you may want to reschedule a dialysis treatment. Will the center help you?

- ***Are peritoneal dialysis (PD) and home hemodialysis offered?***

PD and home hemodialysis let you schedule treatments around your life and your work.

- ***Can I eat or drink when I am on hemodialysis?***

A center may have a good reason why food is not allowed. If a center says no, ask why not.

- ***Does the center have on-site staff to help with insurance questions?***

Not having to go through a billing office will save you time and effort.

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- ***What should I do first if I am having a problem with the care provided by the dialysis center?***

As soon as you think you have a problem, you should immediately talk to the staff to see if they can help. If you are not satisfied with any response you may receive, make sure you talk to the administrator. It is the administrator's responsibility to assure that concerns are dealt with efficiently and effectively. The administrator should always report back to you about their efforts to deal with your concerns.

- ***What should I do if I feel the dialysis center hasn't addressed my concerns adequately?***

You can make a complaint about a dialysis center to the Department of Health. Complaints can be made by letter, telephone or fax. We also have a toll-free hotline that you can call 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The Hotline number is: **1-800-254-5164**.

- ***Who will investigate my complaint and what are their qualifications?***

The Department of Health, Division of Home Health surveyors will investigate your complaint. These surveyors are registered nurses who have been trained and are knowledgeable about federal and state regulations for home health agencies, including dialysis centers.

- ***Will my complaint be kept confidential?***

The person taking your complaint information will ask if you wish to remain confidential. Whenever possible, when we investigate a complaint we will select a group of patients (including the one you are concerned about) who share similar characteristics. In this way, the dialysis center will not know which patient is the target of the investigation. We cannot guarantee that the dialysis center will not figure out who the patient is, but we will not inform them nor confirm their suspicions.

- ***What happens after a complaint is made?***

If the complaint is called into the Hotline, the complaint is logged and reviewed by the Division of Home Health Associate Director who will determine whether the complaint poses potential life-threatening situations to patients. The complaint is then forwarded by computer or faxed to the surveyor to investigate. If the complaint does not present a life-threatening situation, the investigation will be initiated within two (2) days and an on-site investigation will occur within 56 days.

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- ***Will I know the results of the investigation?***

Yes. That is why it is important that you provide us with your name, address, and phone number (including area code). You receive confirmation that the complaint was received, and you will also receive notification afterward telling you the results of the investigation.

- ***What are the possible outcomes of an investigation and what do they mean?***

If the surveyor was able to find sufficient evidence, the complaint will be considered substantiated. If the complaint is substantiated there are two further determinations that are made regarding the problems at the dialysis center. The first determination that can be made is "substantiated with deficiencies cited." If this determination is made the Department will issue a statement of deficiencies or a list of problems to the facility. The dialysis center must submit a written plan of correction (poc) to the Department. The plan tells us how the dialysis center intends to prevent a recurrence of the problems in the future. A second determination that can be made is "substantiated with no deficiencies cited." This means that the allegation was true but it did not violate any of the state or federal regulations. We are only permitted to issue deficiencies according to the state and federal regulations that we monitor and enforce.

It is not always possible to substantiate allegations due to the passage of time or lack of documentation or observation to support a finding of substantiation. This does not mean that the complaint was not true; it simply means we could not find enough evidence to substantiate it at the time of the investigation. Please be assured that we will continue to review all complaint issues when we visit the dialysis center in the future.

- ***What happens if deficiencies are found at a dialysis center?***

For every deficiency identified, the surveyors must decide how serious the problem is for the patients. The surveyors write a description of the problem(s), which is then called a "statement of deficiencies" and submit it to the dialysis center. The dialysis center must submit in writing their proposed solutions to the problem(s). This is called a "plan of correction" (poc). You can ask to see a copy of this report from any dialysis center. You can also view these reports on the Department of Health's website by [clicking here](#).

Depending on the seriousness of the deficiencies, the dialysis center can lose its right to participate in the Federal Medicare program. The dialysis center would lose funding if their services do not meet the minimum Federal regulations.