

# Kidney Failure: Your Options

## What is kidney failure?

Your kidneys are vital organs that clean your blood by removing wastes, extra salt, and fluid as urine. If your kidneys are no longer doing their job, you are facing kidney failure (often referred to as **end stage renal disease** or **ESRD**).

## What are my treatment options?

There are two treatment options for kidney disease, each with its own challenges:

- **Kidney transplant.** This involves surgery to put a healthy kidney from a living or deceased donor into your body. That donated kidney will replace the work done by your failed kidneys. Other health problems, finding a donor in time, surgery complications, medication side effects, or cost could rule out this option.

For more information, review the *Kidney Transplant: Am I a Candidate?* fact sheet.

- **Dialysis.** This treatment filters your blood either outside your body using a special machine or inside your body using the lining in your belly (abdomen). Both methods require a brief, up-front surgical procedure.

Review the *Dialysis: What's the Right Option for Me?* fact sheet with your provider and loved ones to find the best approach for your situation.

## What's right for me?

Your healthcare provider will help you decide what to do next. Your choices can affect your health, quality of life, family, and finances. To help you decide, use the summary of reasons on the back to choose the treatment option that's right for you. (Not all options may be available to you; ask your healthcare provider.)

## To prep for treatment, I need to:

- GET** lab tests on: \_\_\_\_\_
- VACCINATE:** \_\_\_\_\_
- CALL** a registered dietitian for personalized diet help:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- STOP** smoking.
- STAY LOCAL** (avoid long flights and international travel).
- AVOID:**
  - Having any kind of IV line placed in my non-dominant arm (for example, my left arm if I am right handed)
  - Having procedures that use contrast dye
  - Taking ANY pain medications without asking my provider

## What if I don't want treatment?

You may not want to start any treatment, or you may choose to stop treatment at some point. Those with many health problems may feel that treatment will not add to their quality of life and simply prolong suffering.

If you choose not to treat your kidney failure, your life may come to an end rather quickly — often within weeks or months. In this case, hospice care can manage your symptoms and keep you as comfortable as possible. If you're considering this option, it's very important to discuss it with your loved ones and healthcare providers. A short trial of dialysis may be helpful as you decide.

For more information about hospice care, review the *Intermountain Homecare and Hospice Services* booklet.

## Choosing the treatment option that's right for you

You and your healthcare provider will make the choice together, based on your condition, medical needs, and preferences. To help with this process, **check the statements that apply to you**, and see which option they suggest.

	Might <b>CHOOSE</b> because I:	Might <b>NOT CHOOSE</b> because I:
<b>Hemodialysis</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Can easily get to a nearby dialysis center <input type="checkbox"/> Like healthcare providers doing my treatments <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer spending time with others during treatments	<input type="checkbox"/> Want more freedom to plan my treatments around my schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Have no dialysis facilities nearby, or have trouble getting there
<b>Peritoneal dialysis</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Want the freedom to plan my treatments around my schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Like home treatment that doesn't require a partner <input type="checkbox"/> Feel comfortable managing my treatments <input type="checkbox"/> Can do several daily treatments or treatments mostly at night	<input type="checkbox"/> Would rather not manage treatments myself <input type="checkbox"/> Like to swim or take tub baths (not possible with a permanent catheter) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want to be tied to multiple treatments daily or getting treatment while I sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Might gain weight from absorbing calories in the solution
<b>Kidney transplant</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Have been told by my provider that I AM a good candidate for a transplant <input type="checkbox"/> Don't mind taking anti-rejection medications for life <input type="checkbox"/> Am comfortable with having major surgery <input type="checkbox"/> Feel that, between insurance coverage and my own finances, I can afford the costs of surgery and necessary medications	<input type="checkbox"/> Have been told by my provider that I AM NOT a good candidate for a transplant <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want to take anti-rejection medications for life <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want to have major surgery <input type="checkbox"/> Worry about affording the costs of transplant surgery or monthly medications that aren't covered by my insurance

### Upcoming Appointments

Provider name:

Location:

Date/Time:

What I need to bring:

Dialysis center:

Location:

Date/Time:

What I need to bring:

### Learn more about treatment options

- **What I need to know about kidney failure and how it is treated** (National Institutes of Health article at: [tinyurl.com/p6czsua](https://tinyurl.com/p6czsua))
- **National Kidney Foundation: [kidney.org](https://www.kidney.org)**

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