

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham



Part of University Hospitals Birmingham

NHS Foundation Trust



Hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV testing for people with chronic kidney disease and those on dialysis

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To see all of our current patient information leaflets please visit
www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm

Introduction

This leaflet provides information and explains why blood tests to check for the presence of certain infections are needed for people who have chronic kidney disease and those on dialysis treatment.

If you have any questions please speak with your kidney doctor or nurse.

What blood tests are needed?

It is recommended and good practice to test all people on dialysis treatment and those where dialysis or transplantation is being planned, for certain infections in the blood. These infections include hepatitis B, hepatitis C and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Why are these blood tests needed?

During dialysis treatment bodily fluids are removed as part of the blood cleaning process. In haemodialysis blood is taken from the body to enable it to be cleaned using a dialysis machine and then returned. In peritoneal dialysis, fluid is drained into and out of the peritoneal cavity in the abdomen. It is possible that exposure to these body fluids can cause infection in other patients and staff. The testing is therefore important in helping to protect everyone from the spread of infection.

In the early years of dialysis treatment there were outbreaks of hepatitis B, a serious infection which affects the liver. Since that time kidney patients (and staff) have been regularly checked to make sure they do not have this infection and there have been no serious outbreaks in kidney units in the United Kingdom.

There are other infections which can be caught by being exposed to infected blood or some other bodily fluids; these include hepatitis C and HIV, the virus which causes AIDS. Because of the experience with hepatitis B it is important to test dialysis patients regularly to make sure they do not carry hepatitis C and HIV. In addition, we know that if a person with HIV receives a kidney transplant then some of the drugs used to stop rejection of the transplant may make these infections worse. For this reason it is particularly important to know whether individuals carry any of these infections before placing them on the transplant waiting list.

There is no reason to suspect that you have any of these infections but it is important that we do the tests and you will obviously be given the results. Unfortunately there is no alternative way to diagnose whether you are carrying one of these infections except by these tests. You are also entitled to refuse to have the tests.

In the unlikely event that the test results show you have one of these infections, it will allow early treatment to be started and appropriate counselling will be arranged. It is important you understand that a positive HIV test may have consequences when trying to arrange future insurance cover, for example for a mortgage, as well as having an impact for close family and social contacts. Your ongoing kidney care and dialysis treatment will continue.

Strict confidentiality with respect to results will be maintained at all times.

We ask that you sign a consent form to indicate your agreement to have these tests whenever required. It is important that you only sign the form if you are happy that you understand the reasons and implications of the test and that any questions you have about the test have been answered for you. You will be given a copy of the consent form and a copy will be kept in your medical records.

How often are the blood tests taken?

If you are receiving haemodialysis treatment these blood tests will be taken every three months. They will also be taken if you are planning to have dialysis at another dialysis unit and may be taken more frequently if you have had haemodialysis abroad.

It is important that these blood tests are taken before you start on haemodialysis treatment. If dialysis treatment is being planned please ask the kidney doctor or nurse about the blood tests.

Vaccination against hepatitis B infection

The Department of Health recommends that all individuals who may need haemodialysis treatment in the future should be vaccinated against hepatitis B infection.

To ensure you get the best protection from hepatitis B we offer vaccination to people before they start dialysis. If you start dialysis as an emergency you will need to have this course as soon as possible to ensure you are protected. Vaccination will encourage your body to produce antibodies to fight the infection. The vaccination programme consists of a course of four injections which are given into the upper arm over a period of six to twelve months. A simple blood test will be taken at the end of the course of injections to check the level of antibodies. Sometimes with chronic kidney disease it is harder to produce the antibodies and a booster of the vaccine may be needed.

Once the full course has been completed you will have your antibody levels checked every year and further boosters will be given if required.

As with any vaccine or medication there may be some people who experience side effects. The most common are discomfort,

redness and slight swelling at the site of the injection, or mild fever. These should only last for a couple of days.

If you have any questions about vaccination, please talk to your kidney doctor or nurse.

Where can I find further sources of information?

Further information can be obtained from:

The National Kidney Federation www.kidney.org.uk

NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

The Kidney Patient Guide www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk

You will also find local information leaflets within the different renal departments. A wide range of patient information leaflet and fact sheets are available through the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust website and can be accessed via:

www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm

Useful numbers

301 Acute Renal	0121 371 3096
301 Chronic Renal	0121 371 3011
Old Renal Dialysis Unit	0121 627 2910
Aston Cross Dialysis Centre	0121 333 6766
Tipton Dialysis Centre	0121 557 8313
City Hospital Renal Dialysis Unit	0121 507 4014
Kings Norton Dialysis Centre	0121 486 4280
Lichfield Renal Unit	01543 262363
Kidderminster Renal Unit	01562 826370
Hereford Dialysis Centre	01432 277929
Woodgate Valley Dialysis Centre	0121 421 0090
Worcester Dialysis Centre	01905 721 940
CAPD	0121 627 2515
Pre-dialysis Team	0121 627 5752

References

Department of Health (2002) Good practice guidelines for renal dialysis/transplantation units. Prevention and control of blood-borne virus infection.



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk or call 0121 627 7803

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