



Dialysis on Holiday; Staying Safe

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information on some of the risks when having dialysis on holiday. It contains advice and tips for planning dialysis on holiday in the UK or abroad. It is essential that you arrange dialysis when planning any trip away from your base unit and do not miss any scheduled dialysis sessions unless agreed by your kidney doctor.

To do list for planning holiday dialysis:

- Speak to the holiday link nurse in your unit who can provide help and information when planning your trip
- Discuss your fitness to travel and any risks with your kidney doctor or dialysis nurse, especially if you are visiting a 'high risk' country.
- Plan your trip in advance giving as much notice as possible to your dialysis unit, ideally 2-3 months. Some countries may ask for you to have a chest X-ray or other tests before you travel, so it is important to plan well ahead.
- Check with your dialysis nurse whether you are protected against Hepatitis B infection. You may need a Hepatitis B booster vaccination before you travel.

Holiday dialysis in the UK

It is important to ensure that your dialysis arrangements are in place before you book and pay for your holiday as there may be limited availability for dialysis slots on the dates you prefer. The NHS will cover the cost of any dialysis away from your base unit for NHS patients in the UK.

Kidney Care UK offers a service called **Dialysis Freedom** which can help you book dialysis slots in the area you prefer. You can contact them at dialysisfreedom.co.uk or telephone 01509 808668.

Holiday dialysis abroad

Before arranging a trip abroad, please check on the government website Gov.uk that the country is on the green list of countries to travel to. Before arranging a trip abroad, please check on the government website Gov.uk that the country is on the green list of countries to travel to.

The NHS does not cover the cost of any dialysis outside of the UK and you will be expected to pay for your dialysis sessions unless there is a reciprocal agreement in place in that country.

Some state-provided European dialysis units may accept the new Global Healthcare Insurance Card (GHIC) which will cover the cost of your dialysis. You should check in advance whether the unit you are going to accepts the card.

To apply for a GHIC, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card>

Many holiday destinations have dialysis units who cater especially for holiday patients and they will usually help with arrangements. Your dialysis holiday link nurse will also assist you.

'Freedom' is a travel company that specialises in arranging dialysis holidays if you do not want to make the arrangements yourself. They can be contacted at: <https://www.holidaydialysis.co.uk/>

Ensure you take out the necessary travel insurance as your GHIC will not cover you if you have an accident or become unwell and need hospital treatment. The National Kidney Federation has a useful list of holiday insurance companies. Some insurance companies may ask for a 'fit to travel' letter from your kidney doctor:

National Kidney Federation <https://www.kidney.org.uk>

- You may need to take a letter on the plane listing all the medication you are carrying including insulin and/or erythropoietin injections (EPO)
- You will probably have to arrange your own transport (taxi) to and from the dialysis unit

Dialysis cruises

The cost of dialysis treatment on dialysis cruises may be covered by NHS England if the majority of ports of call are in a European Economic Area EEA country, which has a reciprocal agreement with the UK. The Trust does not cover the cost, but can claim this back from NHS England on your behalf. NHS England will only pay the national tariff cost for each dialysis session, which will probably be a lower amount than you are charged by the holiday company. No other healthcare costs will be covered.

You must inform the Trust with the details of your cruise **in advance of the holiday** and get approval so the dialysis tariff cost can be claimed back on your behalf. On return you will need to forward receipts and proof of payment.

For cruises outside of the EEA you must cover the cost yourself.

Holiday dialysis to a high-risk country

There is an increased risk of developing infections in some countries so they have been classified as 'high risk' countries for dialysis patients. In these countries, there is an increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV. These infections are carried into the blood, affecting the liver and immune system, and can also cause infection of the gut. These infections can cause serious illness if contracted and can be easily spread to other people if not managed correctly.

Areas defined as 'high-risk' include countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Countries in the Indian subcontinent including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are considered very high risk due to the following reasons:

- Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV infections are much more common
- Buildings and equipment are not always of the same standard as the UK

- Infection prevention and control standards, including hand washing and avoiding the reuse of disposable medical equipment, are not always as strictly adhered to

Countries considered to be low risk include Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

What special arrangements and monitoring will be required if I have dialysed in a high-risk country?

On returning to the UK you will need to dialyse in a side room on your own designated machine for three months. This means we cannot guarantee that you remain on the same day, time or dialysis unit as you will be placed in a unit with the appropriate side room and machine available. You may have to travel further for your dialysis treatment during this period.

On your return, blood tests will be taken for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV, as well as swabs for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales) (CPE). Blood tests will be taken fortnightly for Hepatitis B and C to ensure if you have contracted an infection it is picked up straight away. The incubation period for these infections is three months. If your blood tests are negative after this time you can return to your normal schedule.

If you are on the transplant list, you will be suspended for three months while in isolation. This is because if you have developed an infection the drugs given for a transplant could make the infection worse.

What if the results show that I have contracted an infection?

If the blood tests show that you have contracted an infection, you will be counselled by your specialist kidney doctor about how this will affect you and your treatment. You will be referred to the appropriate specialist doctor and treatment will be started if available.

For some infections you may need to continue to dialyse in a side room. You may not be able to go back on the transplant list until the infection is treated.

Having a kidney transplant abroad?

In some cases, people may wish, or be required, to travel outside the UK for an organ transplant. A transplant from a living or deceased donor in another country can be undertaken legally, when it is within approved legal, ethical and healthcare frameworks. You must speak to your doctor if you are going abroad for transplantation.

For anyone in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland, it is an offence to seek, offer or receive payment or reward for donating organs for transplant. It is also an offence to initiate, negotiate, advertise or be involved in buying or selling human organs for transplantation anywhere in the world.

Your doctor is required by law to report anyone returning to the UK after receiving a transplant abroad, the circumstances surrounding transplantation will be investigated by the human tissue authority who will consider whether an offence has taken place, and they may refer their report to the police. For more information, please visit the following website:

[The Human Tissue Authority | Human Tissue Authority](#)

