



Information on the risks of having haemodialysis on holiday

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Introduction

This leaflet gives you information on some of the risks when having dialysis on holiday. It contains advice and tips for planning a 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 you 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 base for NHS patients in the UK.

Kidney Care Uk offer a service called **Dialysis Freedom** which can help you to book dialysis slots in the area for prefer. You can contact them at **dialysisfreedom.co.uk** or tel: **01509 808668**

Most units would expect patients to be double vaccinated for COVID-19 and may not accept unvaccinated patients.

Holiday dialysis abroad

Before arranging a trip abroad please check the most recent coronavirus travel restrictions on the **Gov.uk** website and ensure that the country you intend to travel to is on the Green list.

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 GHIC card.

To apply for a GHIC card please visit

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

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

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

- Ensure you take out the necessary travel insurance as your GHIC card will not cover you if you have an accident or become unwell and need hospital treatment. The National kidney federation have 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 EPO
- You will probably have to arrange your own transport (taxi) to and from the dialysis unit

- Most Countries and dialysis units will expect you to be double vaccinated against COVID-19 and have a recent negative COVID-19 PCR test

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.

There is an increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV which are infection carried in the blood affecting the liver and immune system and Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) which is an infection carried in the gut. These infections can cause serious illness if contracted and can be very easily spread to other people if not manage correctly.

Countries 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 for the following reasons:

- Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV infections are much more common
- Building 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 place 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 test will be taken for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV and swabs for MRSA and 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 so if you blood test are negative after this time you can be deisolated.

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 much 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 to how this will affect you and your treatment. You will be referred to the appropriate specialist doctor and treatment will be started if available.

Some infections may require you to continue to dialysis 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?

We strongly recommend that you do not go abroad to obtain a kidney as you are much more likely to die or suffer serious complications or failure of your transplant.

If you are considering this please discuss with your kidney doctor as other options may be available in the UK.

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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Do you really need to go to A&E?

Check symptoms online quickly and safely.

A **free** service for NHS patients.

uhb.nhs.uk/ask

Renal

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 2GW
Telephone: 0121 371 2000
