

# What You Should Know About Dialysis

## What is dialysis?

Dialysis is a treatment for people whose kidneys are not working properly. Dialysis helps remove waste and extra fluid from your blood when your kidneys cannot do it for you.

## What are the benefits?

Some forms of kidney failure are temporary and may get better. Short-term dialysis helps the kidneys rest and recover.

Dialysis also prevents dangerous chemicals like urine and salt from building up in the body.

Some patients who suffer from kidney disease can live for many years with the help of dialysis.

## What are the risks?

When you are put on dialysis, your blood goes out of your body into a machine that cleans it and returns it to you. When the machine removes the 'bad' chemicals from your blood, it also removes many of your body's nutrients and 'good' chemicals.

This can put you at risk for infection. It can also give you a headache, or cause you to feel weak and dizzy.

Dialysis may prevent you from doing some things you enjoy. Dialysis patients cannot eat certain foods or travel to places where treatment is not available.

## What does this mean for me?

You should know that dialysis does not cure kidney disease. It can improve the lives of otherwise healthy patients whose kidneys stop working, but it does not usually help people who are very old or have a terminal illness.

If dialysis treatment cannot help you get well, then starting it may do more harm than good. It can cause side effects that make you feel sick, and may prevent you from having a peaceful, natural death.

## Do I have a choice?

Yes. You have the right to make your own health care choices. It is up to you to decide whether or not dialysis is right for you.

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You should think about the times you will want to have dialysis, and the times you will not. Whatever you decide, talk first with your family and your doctor.

This information sheet was designed to give you a general description of dialysis as a treatment choice near the end of life, some pros and cons of the treatment, and an outline of your options for choosing whether or not you want it to be a part of your Advance Care Plan.



[www.projectgrace.org](http://www.projectgrace.org)

## What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is a thoughtful process used to plan for future healthcare choices. It involves personal reflection and discussions with loved ones and healthcare providers. Your plan should include both a Living Will and the designation of a Healthcare Surrogate who can make decisions on your behalf if you're unable to speak for yourself.

The best time to think and talk about future medical decisions is when you are *well*, rather than in a time of medical crisis.

## Why should I have an Advance Care Plan?

Advances in medicine and technology have given us the ability to sustain life through artificial or mechanical interventions. In cases where patients are terminally ill with no hope of recovery, these interventions can prolong the dying process and prevent them from experiencing a peaceful, natural death.

By establishing an Advance Care Plan while you are well, you can make sure that your wishes are honored later, should you become unable to speak for yourself.

## Does an Advance Care Plan encourage my death?

**NO.** You are not signing an agreement that says that you wish to die. You are making a choice for the future, about the kind of medical treatment you wish to receive when there is little or no hope for recovery.

### Advance Care Planning Helps:

**YOU** make treatment decisions that can affect your life.

**YOUR FAMILY** have peace of mind knowing your decisions.

**YOUR PHYSICIAN** by providing information about the kind of care you want.

## How can Project GRACE help me?

Project GRACE provides advance care planning services, free of charge, to anyone who wishes to communicate their future medical treatment decisions. The Project GRACE Advance Directive is used by many hospital systems across the country. It is acceptable to doctors and easily understood by the public. For more information, visit the Project GRACE website [www.projectgrace.org](http://www.projectgrace.org) or contact our office at 727-536-7364.

Project GRACE is an affiliate of the Suncoast Hospice and supported by grants, sponsorships and community donations through the Suncoast Hospice Foundation.

A gift to Project GRACE will help provide the people you care about the support and resources they need to make informed medical care decisions.

To make a donation, call 727.536.7364

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