



RENAL OUTREACH

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Self-Care Increases Personal Control

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Federal guidelines require that patients be informed of their suitability for transplantation or home dialysis. To meet this requirement, dialysis facilities should inform patients about hemodialysis, both home and in-center, peritoneal dialysis, and transplantation

The guidelines state that *“Home dialysis affords patients’ control over scheduling and setting and it can be done in comfortable familiar surroundings.”* It is also perceived to be less disruptive to family life and employment.

One modality that is not offered as frequently is in-center self care. Patients who would prefer to do home hemodialysis but lack a suitable partner may be interested in this option. Patients who prefer to be independent rather than trust the staff with their care may also prefer to do their own dialysis.

Although this option is not offered in all facilities, having an in-center self-care unit may be an attractive alternative. In this type of setting the patients would come into the facility, set up their own machine, insert their needles and begin dialysis. They would be responsible for monitoring their own vital signs during their treatment. Afterwards, they would clean the machine before going home.

A staff member would be present and available for any problems or questions that may arise or to assist in cannulation if the patient is having difficulty. Some units offer daily dialysis treatments of two hours per day, six days a week.

Self-care dialysis encourages patients to become involved and be responsible for their own dialysis treatments. Patient participation in their own dialysis treatment fosters independence and control, which provides a greater sense of well-being. It is thought that the quality of their lives will improve both physically and mentally when they manage their own treatment.

Many patients desire to return to work because they feel so much better than they did on other modes of dialysis therapy.

If you think you might be interested in pursuing self-care, talk to your facility staff about training.

One place to start might be in the area of self-cannulation. Patients can be trained to insert their own fistula needles usually using the buttonhole technique where the needle is inserted into the same hole each time. If this skill is mastered, you might be interested in pursuing more self-care tasks.
