

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A DIALYSIS CLINIC

Choosing a dialysis clinic is an important decision. If you are a new patient, traveling, or simply looking to transfer to new facility, this decision can seem overwhelming. You will need to consider many factors, including the location, distance from your home, schedule, quality-of-care, and much more. Here are some tips to help you choose a facility that is right for you.

- **Make a visit.** Call and make an appointment to visit the clinic. If you can't go yourself in person, send a friend or family member or call the clinic to learn more. Visiting beforehand will allow you to become familiar with how to get there, what the staff and facility are like, and how comfortable you feel when you're inside.
- **Evaluate the staff.** Is the facility adequately staffed with experienced, trained professionals? During your phone call or visit, did they make you feel welcome? Were they helpful? Knowledgeable? Able to answer your questions?
- **Consider cleanliness.** How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the facility?
- **Consider the location and distance from your home.** Is the facility convenient for you to get to? How far are you willing to travel each week to get to your treatments? Is it important to live close to the facility?
- **Think about your mode of transportation.** Do you have reliable transportation to get to your treatments?
- **Is your nephrologist part of the team?** Do you want to continue being treated by your current nephrologist? Be aware that some nephrologists may only work with a certain dialysis clinic. How important is this to you?
- **Ask about available schedules.** Does the clinic offer a dialysis schedule that fits your needs? Are there openings for new patients on those shifts?
- **Ask about home dialysis.** If you are interested in home dialysis or nocturnal dialysis, does the facility offer these options? You may not be interested in home dialysis now, but you may want the option for later on.
- **Check Medicare's Dialysis Facility Website.** You can also compare dialysis facilities using Medicare's Dialysis Facility Compare website at www.medicare.gov/dialysisfacilitycompare. This tool can help provide you with a "snapshot" of a facility and make some useful comparisons. However, this website only uses health statistics to make comparisons between clinics. It does not take into account things like patient satisfaction, cleanliness of unit, staff competence, and other factors that may be important to you.

Once you choose a facility and start treatment, you may want to continue your evaluation process for a little longer. It will help you decide if you are satisfied with your choice.

Ask yourself:

- How well does the dialysis facility staff listen to me and address my needs?
- How well do I feel during and after dialysis?
- Do I receive clear and understandable advice from the staff in the dialysis facility, including the doctor, advanced practitioner, dietitian, nurse, and social worker? Do they help me understand what I can do to improve my own health?
- Is the staff compassionate? Attentive? Respectful?

How Can I Learn More?

If you have questions or concerns about the quality of care in a particular facility, you should contact the ESRD Network in the region where the facility is located. You can find the ESRD Network by visiting

www.esrdnetworks.org.

Learn more about your rights and responsibilities as a dialysis patient:

www.kidney.org/sites/default/files/docs/dialysisbillrights.pdf.

