

Dialysis away from base (DAFB)

Information for patients

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have when you are planning to travel while undergoing dialysis. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to your kidney care team. Holidays and short breaks can reduce stress and improve wellbeing. Your kidney care team is here to support you in planning a safe and well-deserved break.

When should I notify my kidney care team about travel?

- Please inform your dialysis nurses at your mother unit (the unit that usually provides your dialysis) at least two months before you travel.
- Some centres require up to three months' notice, particularly during busy holiday seasons, so plan early.
- If you are on the transplant list, the transplant co-ordinator must know when and where you are travelling.
- If you visit a high-risk country (anywhere other than the UK, EU, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Japan), you may be suspended from the transplant list for 12 weeks after your return, but this will be discussed further with you before you travel.
- You will be re-activated on the transplant list once follow-up blood tests (virology) are negative.

What do I need to do to prepare for travel?

- It is your responsibility (or your family's) to:
 - find and contact a dialysis unit in your travel destination
 - secure dialysis sessions
 - share the contact details with your named nurse
- Ensure your hepatitis B vaccination status is up to date, especially if travelling to high-risk countries.
- You will need a letter from your consultant confirming fitness to fly and listing your medications.

How often should I dialyse on holiday?

You should continue your usual dialysis schedule (normally three times per week unless your prescription differs).

Will I have to pay for dialysis away from base?

- Abroad:
 - since Sept 2025, the renal unit at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust no longer reimburses holiday dialysis abroad
 - if travelling to the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein you can use a valid GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card) or EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) – this does not guarantee free treatment, so please check with the relevant dialysis unit
 - check the GOV.UK website for reciprocal healthcare agreements with other countries
- Within the UK:
 - you do not have to pay to receive DAFB in the UK at NHS units
 - private UK units may charge unless they have an NHS agreement to cover the cost
 - please always check with your dialysis unit in advance

Do I need travel insurance?

Yes. We strongly recommend that you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance. Check exclusions for pre-existing conditions and dialysis care.

Kidney Care UK (kidneycareuk.org) provides a list of medical travel insurers.

What should I do about medication?

- All medication plans should be discussed with your consultant before travel.
- Plan enough medication for your trip and take it with you:
 - erythropoietin (EPO): will be supplied for the duration of your holiday (usually for the duration of your holiday and up to 2 months)
 - anticoagulation and line lock: should be supplied by the receiving unit (check compatibility)
 - iron: is not prescribed, please ensure your levels are topped up before travelling.
- Carry all medicines in hand luggage, especially refrigerated ones (for example, EPO).
- Use a medical-grade cooler with frozen packs to keep medicines at the correct temperature (2 to 8°C).
- Inform your airline in advance if travelling with refrigerated medicines.

What will happen when I return from travel?

- You must notify your mother unit of your return date.
- If you are away longer than 21 days without notice, your slot may not be guaranteed.
- To ensure dialysis can be provided for you, you will need to contact your mother dialysis unit before your return from holiday to get confirmation of the location.
- If visiting a low-risk country (UK, EU, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan):
 - if away for less than 21 days, you will usually return to your original slot, if possible
 - no extra blood tests or isolation will be required

- If visiting a high-risk country (rest of the world):
 - a risk assessment will be carried out on your return.
 - we will try to arrange your dialysis in your original slot, but this may not always be possible
 - you may need to dialyse in a side room for up to 12 weeks, but you do not need to dialyse on the twilight shift unless you choose to do or this is the only available slot
 - additional blood tests (virology) will be taken on return and every two weeks after up to 12 weeks
- If a slot is unavailable in your mother unit, then it is the responsibility of the mother unit to arrange an alternative holiday dialysis slot elsewhere and update you.
- You may be placed temporarily in another King's College Hospital dialysis unit for the 12-week isolation period if needed.
- If no slot is available, the senior nursing team will review alternatives.
- If there is doubt about your recent dialysis, or your welfare, your mother unit may arrange a dialysis session at Denmark Hill Dialysis unit, where you can be assessed for suitability to return to your mother unit, or another satellite unit.
- Always inform your unit if you had blood transfusions, surgery, or dental treatment abroad.

Where can I find additional support?

Kidney Care UK run the Dialysis Freedom Service, a free service to arrange dialysis away from base in the UK.

- Tel: 01509 815 999
- Website: dialysisfreedom.co.uk/
- Email: info@dialysisfreedom.co.uk

National Kidney Federation

- Tel: 0800 169 0936
- Website: <https://www.kidney.org.uk/travel>

Global Dialysis

- Website: globaldialysis.com

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net