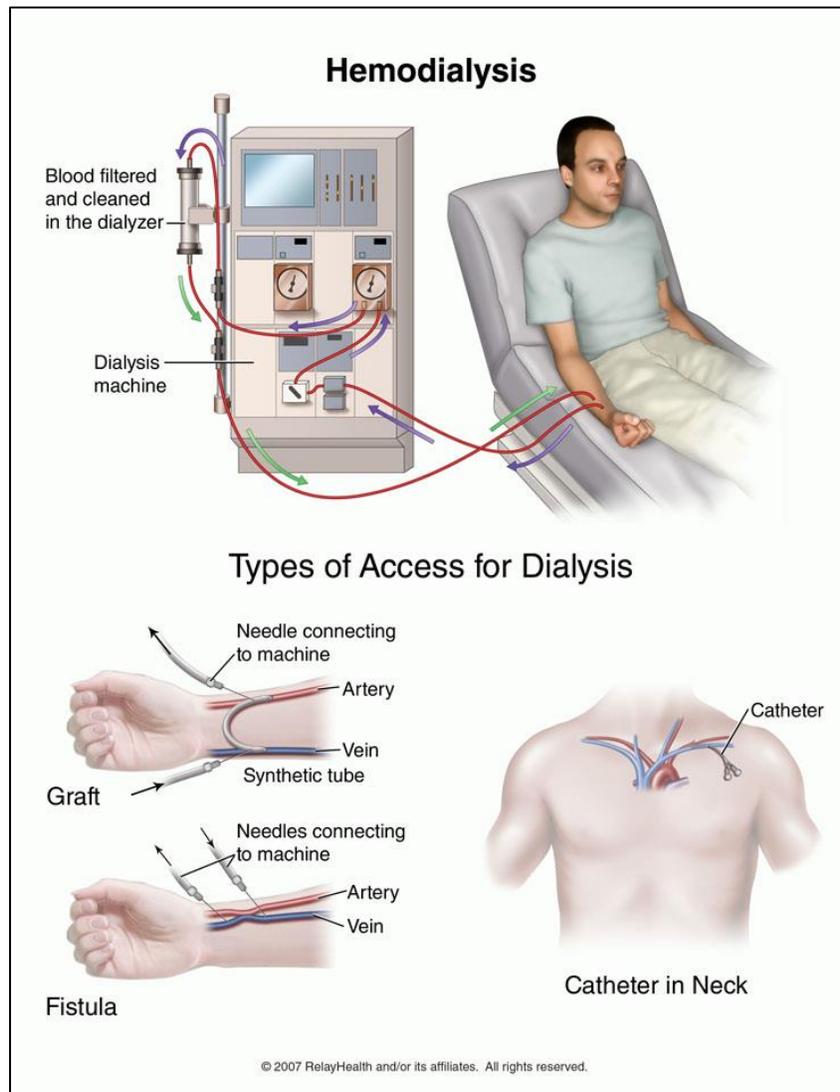


Hemodialysis

What is hemodialysis?

Hemodialysis is a mechanical way to do the work your kidneys normally do. It:

- Cleans your blood by removing wastes.
- Removes extra water, which helps control blood pressure and swelling.
- Helps your body keep the right balance of chemicals such as potassium, sodium, and calcium.



When is it used?

Hemodialysis is used when you have kidney (renal) failure. If kidney failure is not treated, you will have too much water and chemical waste in your blood. This could kill you.

Dialysis is generally started when your kidneys are working at less than 10% of their normal function. There are 2 kinds of kidney failure: acute (sudden) and chronic (slow-developing and permanent). If you have acute kidney failure, you may need dialysis until the cause of the kidney failure is corrected. If you have the chronic form, you may need dialysis for the rest of your life.

The decision to use dialysis depends on:

- why your kidneys stopped working
- other health conditions
- your overall health.

How is it done?

Hemodialysis is the most common method of dialysis. Your blood is filtered through a machine. The machine takes out wastes and extra water. Before your first treatment, an access to your bloodstream must be made. It provides a way for blood to be carried from your body to the dialysis machine and then back into your body. The access can be created in different ways:

- A plastic tube (catheter) is inserted into a large vein in your neck, chest, or leg near the groin.
- You have minor surgery to create a connection between an artery and a vein. The connection is usually in the forearm. A connection called a fistula can be made using your own blood vessels. Or a connection called a graft can be made using a synthetic tube.

You will be given an anesthetic before the access is created so the procedure will not be painful.

When you have hemodialysis, the dialysis machine is attached to the access with a needle. It is usually done about 3 times a week in a dialysis clinic. In some cases it can be done at home with a trained helper. Each treatment takes about 3 to 5 hours. During treatment, you can read, write, sleep, talk, or watch TV.

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[References](#)

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