

From the Committee Chair

Maggie Carey, Chair, Consumer Committee

Welcome to another issue of *Common Concerns*. I recently had the opportunity of attending the Network 11 Annual Meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was a quick trip in and out of St. Paul for me, but two things stand out in my mind.

The first is the quality of the meetings and the speakers. I learned so much that I didn't already know – and I have been doing this for many years now. We received some of the latest information on how to deal with kidney failure and were able to set some really ambitious goals for our upcoming projects. You will be seeing much more on these topics in the coming months.

The second thing that stands out in my mind is that I was physically capable of racing through airports, tracking down shuttle services, and being where I needed to be when I needed to be there. And this is 16

years after experiencing kidney failure! That brings me to the point of this article. If you want to live a full and active life in the future, you **MUST** take proper care of yourself now. The decisions you make today are the ones that will determine how you feel in 10 or 20 years.

During the next year or so we will be giving you some important information on how to take care of your bones and the consequences of neglecting to do so. We will be focusing on what you can do to help control infections. Did you know that the second leading cause of death in kidney patients is infection? That is just one of the interesting things I learned at the Annual Meeting, and it really took me by surprise. There are a lot of ways to make sure this statistic does not apply to you, and we will be giving you information on things you can do every day to help prevent these dangerous infections.

Knowledge is power – and the power to determine how you feel in the future is in your hands today.

Infection Control

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The number one cause of spreading infections between patients in a dialysis center is the lack of hand washing. Hand washing is the most important and simplest way to prevent the spread of infection between patients and staff. Staff caring for you must know when to wash their hands, wear and change their gloves, and wipe down the equipment between patient shifts. This article will teach you the things surveyors observe during a Medicare survey and what you should watch for while

you are in the treatment area. The goal is to prevent or minimize the spread of infections between patients.

I'm sure you have noticed staff wearing gloves, washing their hands, using alcohol-based hand rub, and wiping down equipment. Have you ever wondered how often staff should wash their hands, change their gloves, and clean dialysis equipment, like your chair and machine? Staff should wash their hands before putting gloves on to care for you, immediately after removing gloves, before touching equipment, and before caring for another patient. Staff must wear gloves the entire time they care for you. This means staff must wear

gloves to put you on dialysis, touch your machine and other equipment, and take you off of dialysis. Staff must change their gloves after inserting needles into your fistula or graft. If you have a catheter, gloves must be changed before touching your catheter, after soaking your catheter if this is the procedure staff use, after removing the dressing from your catheter insertion site, and before touching the dialysis machine. Make sure you or staff members cleanse your fistula or graft before needles are inserted.

Staff must wipe down all of the surfaces—the chair, machine, TV, blood pressure cuff or any other items at the station before and after your treatment. The electronic thermometer and blood glucose machine should be wiped down between patients. The stethoscope must be wiped down before and after the nurse or doctor uses it to perform an assessment. Staff must remove gloves and wash hands after removing bloodlines and dialyzer from the machine before wiping the machine down with germicide. As a patient, you can help in the fight to prevent the spread of infections by wearing gloves when you hold your access and washing your hands before you leave the unit. If your access springs a leak while you are holding it, please ask staff for a cloth to wipe away any visible blood.

Surveyors observe staff to make sure they use good infection control practices to prevent the spread of infection between patients. Practicing good infection control techniques is the responsibility of both patients and staff.

We are all in this together.

Facts About Hand Washing

Why is hand washing important? Unwashed or poorly washed hands are a very common way of spreading many diseases, such as: colds, flu, ear infections, strep throat, diarrhea, and other intestinal problems. These diseases are caused by routine actions where germs are passed, such as: handling food, touching doorknobs, shaking hands, and putting your mouth on a telephone receiver. The spread of many germs and viruses can be reduced by hand washing with soap and water.

When should I wash my hands?

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing
- Before eating or handling food
- After handling uncooked meat
- After taking out the trash
- After changing a diaper
- After handling money
- After playing with a pet, especially reptiles, iguanas, turtles, snakes

Also, try not to touch your mouth, eyes, or ears when hands are unwashed.

How do I properly wash my hands?

- Use hot or warm running water.
- Lather hands with soap (any kind).
- Rub hands together for at least 10 seconds.
- Wash the back of hands, between fingers, and under fingernails.
- Rinse with warm water.
- Pat hands dry, beginning at the wrist and moving down.
- Use a paper towel to turn off the water.

How can hand washing help protect my family and me?

Hand washing is the single most important way of preventing the spread of infections, according to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hand washing is the most available “low-tech” preventer of illness. People must take personal responsibility for developing the hand washing habit.

- Parents should teach their children the proper way to wash their hands
- Children should see their parents and other care givers washing their hand frequently.

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Did you know that...

Infection is the second leading cause of death for hemodialysis patients. In 2009, infection was the number 1 citation during the Medicare recertification process by the state survey agencies. Infection control in the dialysis unit is VERY important. Here are some tips to pass on to other patients and staff members! Be a Germ Fighter—it's your health too!

Infection Control Tips: Remember hand hygiene includes washing with antibacterial soap and water and/or alcohol-based hand rubs.

- All staff members and patients should be vaccinated against:
 - *Influenza*
 - *Pneumococcal Pneumonia*
 - *Hepatitis*
- Staff members should wear Personal Protective Equipment when working with patients.
- Patients with a catheter should wear a face mask when the tips of the catheter are exposed.
- Patients should have their catheter dressing changed EVERY treatment AND if it becomes soiled between treatments
- Patients should wash their dialysis access with antibacterial soap and water before each treatment.
- Staff members must perform hand hygiene:
 - *Before caring for patients*
 - *Before placement of an invasive device (fistula needles)*
 - *Before administering medications*
 - *After every contact with a patient or a potentially contaminated surface or object*
 - *After touching blood or body fluids*
 - *After removing gloves*
 - *Between tasks on the same patient*
 - *When hands are visibly soiled (must use soap and water—NOT Alcohol Hand Rub)*
 - *After using the rest room*
 - *Before preparing or handling food*

Be a Germ Fighter! Infection control in the dialysis unit is everyone's responsibility!

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Be Wise...Immunize!

One important way to help prevent infectious diseases is by being immunized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following immunizations for dialysis and transplant patients.

Influenza

All adults and children over the age of 6 months should be immunized against influenza. The vaccine that is available currently is effective against both seasonal flu and H1N1 (swine flu) in one injection. This recommendation is especially important for those individuals with chronic diseases such as kidney disease.

Hepatitis B

Although the presence of Hepatitis B (HBV) in hemodialysis patients has decreased throughout the years, outbreaks continue to occur among non-vaccinated patients. Because of this, the CDC recommends vaccination of all non-immune persons with chronic kidney disease, including pre-dialysis, hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and home dialysis patients. This vaccination is given by means of 3 injections with the potential of an additional booster. Periodic testing is done to make sure additional vaccination is not necessary.

Pneumococcal Pneumonia

Hospitalization for pneumonia continues to rise for hemodialysis patients and has been relatively steady for peritoneal dialysis and transplant patients. Therefore, immunization for pneumonia is recommended for all patients with chronic diseases such as chronic kidney disease. This vaccination consists of one injection followed in 5 years by a booster injection.

The costs of immunizations are covered for Medicare patients. For advice on immunizations, please consult with your health care team. For more information on the importance of immunizations, visit the CDC Website at www.cdc.gov.

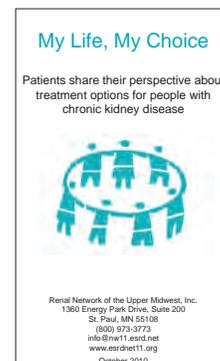
Dialysis Facility Compare

www.medicare.gov/dialysis is a Website that provides important information and resources for patients and family members who want to learn more about chronic kidney disease and dialysis. Look at the information on Dialysis Facility Compare carefully. Use it with other information as you compare facilities and decide where to get dialysis. You can find and compare information about the services and quality of care provided at dialysis facilities in any state. You can also find addresses and phone numbers for each facility.

Patient Options Booklet

Network 11's Consumer Committee has developed a Patient Options booklet that discusses each modality. This booklet is available:

- from your dialysis provider
- by calling Network 11 toll free at (800) 973-3773
- via the Network 11 Website, download a copy at www.esrdnet11.org/consumer_committee.asp



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