Dialysis away from base
(holiday dialysis)

This information is for kidney patients who wish to have dialysis treatment away from their base unit or any other dialysis centre managed by Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

How can I arrange dialysis elsewhere?

The first step is to check with your usual kidney care team to ensure that you are fit enough to travel. You should do this approximately two months before you plan to travel.

Next, choose your destination and find out where the nearest dialysis unit is located. Nursing staff can advise you how to go about this, but you will need to make contact with your unit of choice to see if they can accommodate you for dialysis on your preferred dates. Not all NHS dialysis units can accommodate extra patients for holidays, so you may need to try more than one centre.

Finally, inform the nursing staff at your Guy’s and St Thomas’ dialysis unit so that we can forward your clinical information to your holiday dialysis unit (we will seek your permission to do this). We advise that you check with your holiday dialysis unit to make sure that they have received your clinical information. You should also ask them to confirm your dialysis appointment days / times. You may wish to ask for a named contact person at the unit and, if you are funding the treatment yourself, confirm the costs.

Dialysis in the UK

At an NHS dialysis unit you may have an unlimited number of holiday dialysis sessions per year, providing the unit can accommodate you. In a private (non NHS) unit in the UK you may have up to a maximum of 6 sessions of dialysis per year, provided the cost per session does not exceed £300.

- Please note that if you dialyse in a private unit without written agreement of funding from Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, you may be responsible for the full cost of your dialysis treatment(s).

- You will need to pay for your own travel, insurance and accommodation costs and you will need to arrange and pay for your own transport to and from the dialysis unit.
Dialysis outside of the UK

Funding cannot be provided by the Trust for dialysis abroad.

1. Information about dialysis within the European Economic Area (EEA):

Dialysis units in countries within the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland may accept the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). You can apply for a free EHIC online at [www.ehic.org.uk](http://www.ehic.org.uk) or by phoning the automated service on 0300 330 1350.

Please ensure when arranging dialysis abroad that the unit you choose will accept the EHIC to cover the full cost of your dialysis treatment. You will have to meet any extra costs, such as administration, yourself. Please note that the EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. We advise you to discuss your insurance requirements with your insurance company and ensure your policy covers pre-existing conditions.

Some countries, such as France, ask for a contribution towards the costs of your dialysis. This is often referred to as a co-payment. Please always check that a co-payment is not required as you will be liable for this cost.

More advice is available from the Post Office in a leaflet entitled, Health Advice for Travellers, or online at NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC)

2. Information about dialysis outside of the European Economic Area (EEA):

If you wish to travel to a non EEA country, you will need to check whether or not the country has a bilateral healthcare agreement with the UK. This information is available on the NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad). If they do not have a bilateral healthcare agreement, you will be liable for the entire cost of your treatment(s) in that country.

Some countries, such as Australia, have a bilateral agreement with the UK, but you should always check with the dialysis unit to make sure that you will not incur costs for your treatment. If you are travelling to Australia, treatment must be arranged in advance at a state facility and costs will be met by the Australian Medicare system. Please go to [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au) for further information and contacts.

Reducing infection risks

Please ask for advice from your doctor about any vaccinations or medications you may require when travelling. It is advisable to do this at least six weeks before you wish to travel.

Blood-borne infections, such as hepatitis B and hepatitis C, are more common in other parts of the world than they are in the UK. As a dialysis patient, you are more vulnerable to these infections, which can be life-threatening. More advice is available from [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

If you are planning to travel to a country where blood-borne infections are common, we can supply you with sufficient disposable equipment for two weeks of dialysis treatment, including dialysers and, if appropriate, blood lines for the dialysis machine. Please discuss your requirements with the nurse in charge of your dialysis unit.

If you have been to a country where blood-borne infections are common (for example, the Indian subcontinent and parts of Africa), as a precaution you will be required to dialyse in isolation for two months following your return. This is to safeguard other patients from the risk of infection. You will also be suspended from the transplant list for two months. This is because
the transplant medicines can be dangerous for people with recently acquired infections. Your hepatitis B and C levels will be monitored every two weeks and if they are negative after two months, you can return to being dialysed as normal and you will be re-activated on the transplant list. This is Department of Health recommended practice.

**Useful sources of information**

**NHS Choices**
For information about healthcare abroad.
www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/Pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx

**National Kidney Federation**
For an introduction to holidays for kidney patients.
www.kidney.org.uk/help/holidays/holidays-tips/
t: 0845 601 02 09

**British Kidney Patient Association**
For information about holiday grants.
www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk/holidays
t: 01420 541424

**Dialysis Freedom**
For information about UK dialysis holidays.
www.dialysisfreedom.co.uk
t: 01509 808 668

**Global Dialysis**
For information about dialysis holidays abroad.
www.globaldialysis.com

**Contact us**
Please ask the kidney care team at your Guy's and St Thomas’ dialysis unit for more information about holidays for dialysis patients

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**
To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:
e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s
e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk