

## **Resources for Dialysis Facility Patients**

In addition to hospital and surgical patients, chronic hemodialysis patients are at high risk for HAI. Their heightened risk is, in part, due to the nature of the hemodialysis process. This process requires vascular access (generally through insertion of a catheter into a vein in the arm or other body site) for prolonged periods, thus increasing the risk of infection through contaminated medical equipment, supplies, environmental surfaces, and hands of healthcare personnel. Hemodialysis patients also have weakened immune systems that increase their susceptibility to infections, and they are more likely to require hospitalizations and surgeries which further increase exposure to HAI. The following steps, published by the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases, can help dialysis patients protect their vascular access site and reduce risk of infection.

- ✓ Make sure your nurse or technician checks your access site before each treatment.
- ✓ Keep your access site clean at all times.
- ✓ Use your access site only for dialysis.
- ✓ Be careful not to bump or cut your access.
- ✓ Don't let anyone put a blood pressure cuff on your access arm.
- ✓ Don't wear jewelry or tight clothes over your access site.
- ✓ Don't sleep with your access arm under your head or body.
- ✓ Don't lift heavy objects or put pressure on your access arm.
- ✓ Check the pulse in your access every day.

These steps and other useful information can be found on the National Kidney and Urologic diseases Information Clearing house website:

<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/vascularaccess/#venouscatheter>.

Another useful internet tool for hemodialysis patients is Medicare's Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC). This website provides useful information about kidney disease, the dialysis process, and Medicare-approved dialysis facilities nationwide. It presents facility contact information and characteristics such as types of dialysis offered (in-center hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and home hemodialysis training), number of treatment stations, number of shifts starting 5 PM or later, initial date of Medicare certification, and ownership type (profit or non-profit). It provides a "compare" function, so that consumers can compare selected facilities in terms of characteristics, services, and healthcare quality indicators. This information can help dialysis patients select dialysis facilities that best meet their needs, and patients already receiving dialysis can review their facility's information and discuss it with their dialysis caregivers. DFC also provides a kidney disease dictionary, a list of dialysis patient rights and responsibilities, frequently asked questions, and links to national kidney disease and transplant organizations that provide valuable educational materials.