

DIALYSIS TERMS QUICK REFERENCE

Plain-language explanations of words you may hear during treatment.

Anticoagulant / Heparin

A medication that may be used during hemodialysis to help prevent blood from clotting in the dialysis tubing and dialyzer.

Arterial line

The tubing that carries blood from your body to the dialyzer.

Arterial pressure

A pressure reading the dialysis machine monitors on the arterial side of the blood circuit during treatment.

Blood flow rate / BFR

The rate at which blood moves through the dialysis tubing and dialyzer during treatment. The dialysis machine displays this rate, and your care team sets it as part of your treatment prescription.

Blood pump

The part of the dialysis machine that moves your blood through the tubing and dialyzer at a steady rate.

Bruit

The sound of blood flowing through a fistula or graft. Your care team may listen for it with a stethoscope when checking your vascular access.

Cannulation

The step where needles are placed into a fistula or graft at the start of treatment so blood can flow to and from the dialysis machine.

Catheter

A soft tube placed in a large vein, usually in the neck or chest, that can be used for hemodialysis access.

Dialysate

The fluid used during hemodialysis to help remove waste and extra fluid from your blood through the dialyzer.

Dialysate flow rate / DFR

The rate at which dialysate moves through the dialyzer during treatment.

For more dialysis planning tools and patient resources, visit [RenalCarePlanner.com](https://www.renalcareplanner.com).
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Dialyzer

The filter used during hemodialysis to help remove waste and extra fluid from your blood. Some people informally call it an “artificial kidney.”

Fistula

A type of vascular access made by surgically connecting an artery and a vein, usually in the arm. It is often preferred for long-term hemodialysis when appropriate for the patient.

Graft

A type of vascular access made by using a soft, man-made tube to connect an artery and a vein.

Hemodialysis

A treatment that uses a machine and dialyzer to filter waste and extra fluid from your blood when your kidneys can no longer do this well enough on their own.

Infiltration

When a dialysis needle moves outside the intended blood vessel or blood leaks into the surrounding tissue. This may cause swelling, bruising, discomfort, or other changes around the access.

Kt/V

A number your care team uses to help measure how effectively a dialysis treatment removed waste from your blood. It is calculated using blood tests and treatment information.

Machine alarm

An alert from the dialysis machine that tells staff something about the treatment needs attention. An alarm does not automatically mean an emergency.

Post-treatment weight

Your weight taken after dialysis ends. Your care team compares it with your pre-treatment and target weights as part of evaluating your fluid balance.

Pre-treatment weight

Your weight taken before dialysis begins. Your care team uses it, along with your target weight and other information, to help plan fluid removal for that treatment.

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