

Medicare Part D: Open Enrollment October 15—December 7, 2017

Each year, Medicare Part D has an open enrollment period from October 15—December 7. During this time, you can enroll in a drug plan or make changes to your current drug plan. This is a good time for you to look over your current medications and choose a drug plan that is best for you. The cost and coverage of your Part D, or prescription drug plan, can change each year.

When reviewing your plan each year, ask yourself some questions. Does it cover the medications you take? How much will your medications cost you? How much is the monthly premium for your drug plan? Do you qualify for extra help for the cost of your plan and your medications?

If you are satisfied with your current coverage, you don't have to do anything during open enrollment. If you want to change your drug plan, you can call Medicare, and a representative can help you decide which plan is best for you. Or, you can go online and compare the available drug plans. Make sure you have an updated list of the medications you take and any personal information that you may need, such as your social security number.

To enroll by phone: 1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227)

To enroll online: <https://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan/questions/home.aspx>

Treatment Options: Patient Story

My name is Dee Clark. When I first learned my transplant failed, I was distraught. When I was receiving in-center dialysis, it seemed like my life revolved around dialysis. I was always either on the dialysis



machine or in bed recovering from my treatments. I always felt completely washed out, tired, and miserable after my treatments.

Thankfully, my doctor shared with me that home dialysis was an option. I would be in charge of my own treatments. I wouldn't have to drive to a clinic 3 days a week, and I would feel much better than I did in-center. I do not regret my decision! I have a lot more energy and more time to live my life, on my own terms. I'm not going to lie, kidney failure still isn't fun, and I sometimes have days when I'm feeling down. But, having the freedom to do my treatments at home, on my own time, makes it a lot more bearable.

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Vascular Access in Dialysis Patients

As a dialysis patient, you have probably heard the phrase “your access is your lifeline.” There is a good explanation for the use of this phrase in the dialysis world. One goal of the ESRD Networks is for patients and their families to learn how to choose and care for the right access for dialysis. Within the ESRD community, we continually share best practices centered on what’s best for you, the patient.

Lifeline for a Lifetime, for example, is a guide that will help you choose, plan, track, and care for the best vascular access for you or your loved one. It is an eight- step plan designed to meet your access needs. By reviewing all the steps in this program, you will be able to tell where you are in the process and establish a goal for the best access option. For instance, if a patient is new to dialysis, *Step 1: Making an Access Plan*, can help the patient and their family choose the right access. You and your interdisciplinary team can work together to create a good vascular access plan. Living to the fullest with ESRD is very important for each patient, and it’s the key to getting the best dialysis results. Learning about your vascular access needs and knowing what actions to take will help you stay healthier, feel better, and perhaps live longer.

The Networks believe in empowering patients and families through communication and community support. The *Community Connections* section of this toolkit provides many resources including patient stories, motivational videos, social media tools, opportunities to connect with

other patients, and how to establish effective peer mentorship programs.

In conclusion, our vascular access goals include sharing information and resources, looking at best practices, and using patient-focused initiatives. That’s why understanding your vascular access needs is a very important step towards having a better quality of life. The Lifeline for a Lifetime program offers many tools that can be useful for all ESRD patients and their families. You can access these tools by visiting: <http://esrdncc.org/en/resources/lifeline-for-a-lifetime/>.

Source:

<http://esrdncc.org/en/resources/lifeline-for-a-lifetime/>

Quality Incentive Program (QIP)

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In our Fall 2016 issue, we discussed what the End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Quality Incentive Program (QIP) is. The QIP is the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) program that ties your facility’s Medicare payments to how well they perform on selected quality measures (meaning how well they take care of you). Some of the measures that are monitored include bloodstream infections (how well your facility prevented infections during treatments), hypercalcemia (keeping you from having

too much calcium in your blood), Kt/V (how well they clean your blood during treatments), and how well they are reporting your pain assessments and depression screenings.

All of the data on these measures are collected and calculated, and the results are included on your facility's Performance Score Certificate (PSC), on a scale of 0-10 per measure. Your facility has to receive a score of at least 49 to avoid a CMS payment

reduction.

Facilities are required by CMS to post their Performance Score Certificate (PSC) in **both English and Spanish** for their patients. You can also find your facility's performance scores on each individual measure through the Dialysis Facility Compare website (<https://www.medicare.gov/dialysisfacilitycompare>). You can compare their ratings to other facilities too.

Vaccines for People on Dialysis

Source: www.meiresearch.org

Influenza (Flu)

Flu Risks: The flu can worsen diabetes, heart failure, or asthma. And each year, 36,000 people in America die from the flu.

About the Vaccine (Flu Shot)

- A flu shot will help protect you for the whole flu season (which can last from October through May).
- In about 2 weeks, the vaccine will start to help your body fight the flu.
- Get a flu shot early in the flu season to give it time to work.
- Each year the flu virus changes. So, you need a new flu shot every year – even if you had the flu last year.
- The nasal spray flu vaccine is not a safe choice for you or those who live with you because your immune system is suppressed.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia Risks: Pneumonia affects 1 out of 100 people each year. Pneumonia and the problems it can cause are deadly, and the risk of death is higher in people on dialysis.

About the Pneumonia Vaccine

- The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect you from 23 types of infections. It works 60-70% of the time.
- In about 2-3 weeks, the vaccine will start helping your body fight against the pneumonia bacteria.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

Hepatitis B Risks: Hepatitis B can become a chronic (long-term) infection. It can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and death. The Hepatitis B vaccine can help protect you against chronic HBV infection.

About the Hepatitis B Vaccine

- Your doctor will test your blood to see if you need this vaccine.
- If you had Hepatitis B – which you may not have known you had it – then you don't need the vaccine.
- Usually, a series of 3 or 4 Hepatitis B shots is needed to protect you. You may need extra doses. Some people do not respond to the vaccine at all.

Dialysis Facility Compare

Dialysis Facility Compare is a website that helps you compare dialysis facilities when you plan to travel or compare facilities in your area.

The information on Dialysis Facility Compare includes:

- Dialysis facility contact information and services offered
- Clinical quality of care Star Ratings
- Clinical quality information
- Patient experience of care survey results

How to Use Dialysis Facility Compare

- Go to www.medicare.gov and select, "Find Dialysis Facilities."
- Choose a search method. You can search by zip code, city, state, or facility name.
- Select the dialysis facility you would like to get more information about. You may choose up to three facilities to compare the information, then decide which unit is best for you.
- You can view the general information, survey of patients' experiences, and/or quality of patient care.

Dialysis Friendly Recipe

Spicy Salt Substitute

www.nwkidney.org



Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons garlic power
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1 teaspoon powdered lemon rind

Preparation

1. Mix ingredients well in blender.
2. Store in a sealed container with a few grains of rice to keep it from clumping.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 12; Carbohydrates 3g; Protein 0g; Sodium 1mg; Potassium 47mg; Phosphorus 16mg



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