



Let's Talk About It!

Patients Talking to Patients About Treatment Time

By Kathy Kirk-Franklin & Eddie Taylor



Hello, my name is Kathy Kirk and I'm a dialysis patient. I've been a patient for just over a year. I'd like to talk to you --- patient - to - patient about missing treatments or shortening your dialysis time. It is more than just TREATMENT COMPLIANCE. It's about the consequences to your body, to your overall health and to your LIFE.

So let's talk about it.



And my name's Eddie Taylor. I've been a hemodialysis patient for eighteen years and have recently been transplanted. During these many years I've witnessed a lot of patients shorten their dialysis time or miss their treatments without fully understanding the cost to their health and well-being. As a patient, I made my dialysis MY PRIORITY. I never missed a treatment and actually stayed on extra time if I needed it. I learned early on that by being compliant with my treatment I could feel better and experience fewer of the health problems that come with being a dialysis patient.

Let us share our experience with you.

Shortened and missed treatments mean more toxins in your body. Here are just a few of the effects:

1. Dizziness.
2. Vomiting – caused by the build-up of poisons in your system and directly related to not having enough dialysis.
3. The phosphate levels go up affecting bone density and causing weakened, brittle bones
4. Fluids build up causing bloating and increased pressure on the heart and maybe leading to congestive heart attack
5. Potassium levels go up which can cause an irregular heart beat or lead up to your heart stopping
6. All of these factors affect your numbers. For example when have too many poisons in your system, your KT/V drops and that means you could use more treatment time. The higher your KT/V, the better your dialysis is working and the better you will feel.

Heard this all before? So why have so many of our fellow patients chosen to let it all fall on deaf ears. Too many patients regularly short-change themselves when it comes to treatment time. Even one shortened or missed treatment is one treatment too many.

The minute you start making allowances: *WHAT For* and *WHY* you can miss or need to get off early or just come late --- the easier it will be cut corners with your life support system.

Make no mistake it's your life we are talking about --- so how about getting your priorities straight. And by this we mean:

1. Come to all of your treatment.
2. Come on time.
3. Stay for your full time.
4. Consider staying on extra time when you are carrying too much fluid or your numbers show you need it.

If you are coming up against some problems, then find ways to work them through. For many patients, transportation to and from the dialysis center is a big headache. But don't just shake your head and cry, "What can I do?"

And don't expect one person to be your backup. Get everyone you can to get involved in helping you get what you need.

For example, check with your social worker or patient care person to see what transportation assistance might be available. Call on family members, neighbors, and community and church groups to help you with transportation. Then set-up a "transportation team" with as many pinch hitters as possible and work with them to create a schedule. It's not easy. But it will never happen if you don't turn over every possibility and if you don't ask. So don't be afraid to ask.

Another big problem is scheduling. Remember, there is only one PRIORITY here --- staying alive. So arrange your life around the one thing you really can't do without --- YOUR DIALYSIS.

And finally, make the most of the time you have on dialysis by coming with a positive attitude.

Remember only YOU can make dialysis work for you.

A word to patients who are new to dialysis --- dialysis is a process and you may not feel its benefits right away. It is working but it may take some time for your body to adjust to dialysis and for dialysis to clear up some of the negative effects of too many poisons in your body or their effects on other systems in your body. So be patient and stick to your diet, visit your doctor regularly, and make sure you don't miss or shorten your treatment time. And remember to ask questions because the more you know and understand about renal failure and dialysis, the easier it will be for you to do what you need to do!