Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis is a way of taking body wastes, poisons and extra water out of your blood. During hemodialysis your blood travels outside your body to a machine. This machine is called the dialyzer. Your blood is cleaned by a special filter in the machine.

The blood is usually removed and put back into your arm. This place in your arm is called an access. Veins by themselves are not big enough. The access in your arm is made by joining an artery and a vein together during surgery. Most people will have their surgery 1 - 6 months before the access is used for dialysis. The arm you use less often will be used. You may have a test called a sonogram before surgery. This test looks at how your blood flows. This test is painless. The test will help find the best place to make your access.

At the start of each dialysis treatment 2 needles will be put into the access. Your blood goes through one of the needles to the dialyzer. You will not feel the blood moving. Only about 1 cup of blood is out of your body at one time. The rest of your blood is still in your body.

The dialyzer takes the waste out of your blood. The waste collects in a tube at the back of the machine. Your clean blood goes back to your body through the other needle.

You may hear the machine beep. This does not mean something is wrong. The beeps let your doctor know if they need to make any changes.

Usually you will go to a dialysis center 3 times a week. Visits will last 3 - 4 hours. You may go on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. You must go this often because all the blood in your body must go through the dialyzer many times.

Your doctor will weigh you before and after each dialysis. Your blood will be tested to see if any changes need to be made to your dialysis treatment.

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