

THINGS YOU CAN DO!

Typically there are between 10,000 and 10 million bacteria on each hand. By taking an active role in your health you can protect yourself from infections. Here are some things we recommend.

What	How	When/Why
Speak up!	Do not hesitate to tell caregivers if you are feeling poorly or have concern. Report any signs of infection no matter how small they may seem. Ask your dialysis care team to let your doctor know too! Talk to your doctor about any worries you have about your safety. Ask your caregivers to explain procedures and what they are doing to prevent infection.	Always. If you have any questions about your health and/or your treatment, ask your caregiver. If you feel something is unusual, talk to your dialysis care provider and ask if something has changed.
Keep your hands clean	Ask your caregivers, family and friends to do the same. If you notice someone has not washed their hands, ask them to do so. Make sure all healthcare providers clean their hands before and after caring for you or your vascular access site. Washing hands prevents the spread of germs.	Always. Always wash your hands after you have touched your access, another patient, staff, or any equipment to protect yourself from an infection. Always wash your hands after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.
Keep your access site clean	Always wash your fistula or graft prior to a dialysis treatment. Use the <i>sink designated for patients</i> to wash your hands and access site. Remember to use a paper towel to turn off the faucet. Drying your access with a clean paper towel after you are done washing is important too! Do not replace clothing over your access after it has been washed it.	Always. Washing and drying your access site before your treatment helps prevent bacteria from getting onto your access.
Keep your hands away from your access site	Never scratch or pick at the access site and don't remove any scabs at the site.	Always. Your hands and fingernails can have invisible bacteria on them even after you wash them. These germs can infect your access so it's best to keep your hands away, except when washing or checking for pulse.
Ask your caregivers if you can shower or swim in a pool	Some access types (like a catheter) do not allow for this. A wet dressing can become a magnet for germs to breed. Inform your nurse or doctor if the bandage around an access site becomes wet or dirty.	Always. You are responsible for keeping your access site safe between dialysis treatments.