

Does this Look Normal?

A Patient's Guide to Infection

YOU are an essential part of your healthcare team. Remember to check daily for signs of infection. Start with your dialysis access (fistula/graft/catheter), and then take a few moments to check your entire body. If you notice anything suspicious or unusual, speak with your dialysis care team about it.



Possible infections and areas of infection common in dialysis patients include:

- Dialysis access infection (fistula, graft, hemodialysis catheter, peritoneal dialysis catheter)
- Skin Infection
- Cellulitis (bacterial infection involving the skin)
- Foot ulcers
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
(Yes, dialysis patients CAN get UTIs.)
- Blood stream infection (BSI) that could lead to sepsis, which causes a body-wide inflammation in response to an infection
- Tooth/gum infections

Tips for speaking with your healthcare team when something isn't right

Every time you begin a dialysis treatment, your technician/nurse should ask you if everything is ok. It is important that you answer honestly, and use this time to let your care team know if something has changed. Your dialysis team will then be able to help you get treatment for an issue/situation BEFORE it becomes a real problem.

Remember: It's important for you to let your healthcare team know if anything is wrong.

- If you have questions before your treatment, write them down and ask them when you are at your dialysis unit. Be sure to write down the most important questions first to make sure they get answered.
- Tell your healthcare team if you need more time to talk about something. If the doctor isn't available to help, you should be able to talk to a nurse practitioner, nurse, or physician assistant. If no one else is available, see if you can schedule another appointment to talk about what's wrong.

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End-Stage Renal Disease
Network of the Ohio River Valley

To file a grievance, please contact:

IPRO ESRD Network of the Ohio River Valley
3201 Enterprise Parkway, Suite 210, Beachwood, OH 44122
Phone: (216) 593-0001 • Toll-Free Patient Line: (844) 819-3010
Fax: (216) 593-0101 • E-mail: info@nw9.esrd.net
Web: esrd.ipro.org

Three main signs of infection are: Redness, Swelling, and Pus

Signs and Symptoms of Local Infection

- **Fever:** Fever is the only whole-body symptom that can be caused by an infection.
- **Foul Odor Discharge:** A foul odor discharge from the affected area is a telltale sign of local infection.
- **Heat at the Site:** Local infection might cause the area to be warm to the touch.
- **Pain:** Pain, in and around the affected area, is an obvious sign of local infection.
- **Pus:** Pus, a thick discharge that is typically white-yellow or yellow, is a sign of local infection.
- **Redness and Swelling:** Local infection might cause redness and swelling in the affected area.

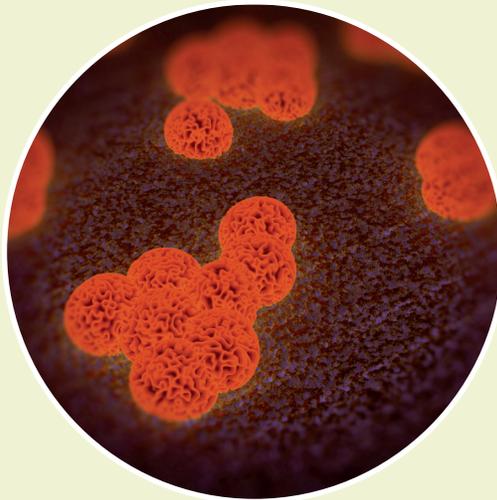


Photo above: MRSA bacteria.

Signs and Symptoms of Systemic Infection

(Systemic: [sis-tem'-ik]: a term used to describe an overall, whole body or bloodstream infection)

- **Aches:** When a person is suffering from systemic infection, he/she experiences aches in areas such as the forehead and back. In extreme cases, the person experiences body aches too.
- **Chills:** Systemic infection may trigger chills, which makes a person shiver even if wearing layers of heavy clothes.
- **Fever:** Fever is a telltale sign of systemic infection. Depending upon the severity of the infection, the person might suffer from low to high fever.
- **Nausea:** Systemic infection may trigger a feeling of nausea. The person reacts to certain smells by vomiting.
- **Vomiting:** Vomiting is one of the major symptoms of systemic infection.
- **Weakness:** Overall weakness in the body is another symptom of systemic infection.



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