



# Network 7 Patient Newsletter

October 2019

## IN-CENTER HEMODIALYSIS CONSUMER ASSESSMENT OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND SYSTEMS (ICH-CAHPS)

Have you ever wondered what that survey is that you get in the mail twice per year, the one that asks kidney patients who are on dialysis at in-center facilities about their experiences? It's your opportunity to tell CMS (the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) what you think about the care you receive at dialysis.

### Did you know that ...

- Most dialysis facilities are **required** to have patients surveyed?
- The surveys are **sent by third party companies**, *not* the dialysis facility?
- **Dialysis staff cannot help you answer the questions** because they are not allowed to know the names of the survey respondents?
- Survey questions **focus on your experiences** with your kidney doctor, the dialysis center staff, and the cleanliness of your facility?

The ICH-CAHPS surveys are sent twice a year by mail to your home. **Do not throw the survey away!** The survey company may also contact you by phone. Because they are not attached to your dialysis facility, they can help you answer the survey questions.

### Your answers matter!

Your answers tell CMS how your dialysis facility is doing and CMS uses them to help determine the facility's CMS star rating.

If you have questions about the survey, you can ask a dialysis staff member. But remember, they can only give you general information. They cannot help you answer the survey questions. Or, you can contact [ichcahps@rti.org](mailto:ichcahps@rti.org) or call 1.866.245.8083.

### Fall 2019 Survey Dates

Pre-notification letters mailed	10/18/2019	Second survey mailed	11/29/2019
First survey mailed	11/1/2019	Survey ends	01/10/2020

### WHERE CAN YOU GET CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT TREATING KIDNEY DISEASE?

The American Association of Kidney Patients

[www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org)

Medical Education Institute

[www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org)

National Kidney Foundation

[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation

[www.pdkcure.org](http://www.pdkcure.org)

To file a grievance, please contact  
HSAG: ESRD Network 7:

800.826.3373

[info@nw7.esrd.net](mailto:info@nw7.esrd.net)

3000 Bayport Drive, Ste. 300

Tampa, FL 33607

[www.hsag.com/esrdnetwork7](http://www.hsag.com/esrdnetwork7)

### MEDICARE PART D OPEN ENROLLMENT

Not clear on what to do about Medicare Open Enrollment and Medicare Part D (Drug) coverage? Here are some frequently asked questions—and their answers—to help you get started.

#### What is Medicare Part D?

Medicare Part D is the part of Medicare that helps pay for your medications.

#### Is Part D free?

Not usually. In 2018 the average cost of Medicare Part D was \$34 per month.

#### When can I apply for Part D?

You can apply when you are first eligible for Medicare or during open enrollment: October 15—December 7, 2019.

#### How much will my medications cost?

That depends on which Part D plan you choose.

#### How can I choose the best Part D plan for me?

Go to the Medicare Plan finder website at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Or call 1.800.MEDICARE (1.800.633.4227).

#### Do I have to apply for Part D?

Yes and no, Part D is an optional coverage, but if you want it, you do have to apply. If you have drug coverage through another insurance plan, you don't have to apply for Part D and can apply at a later time without penalty. If you don't have drug coverage through another company and don't apply for Part D as soon as you are eligible, a late enrollment penalty may apply.

#### Who can I go to for questions?

Your dialysis social worker or insurance counselor may be able to answer some of your questions about Part D. However, they are not allowed to choose a plan for you.

Source: <https://www.2020medicare.us/medicare-part-d/>



### Share Your Feedback!

Let us know how we're doing:

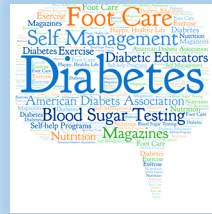
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G73VK63>

## THERE IS HELP FOR MANAGING YOUR DIABETES Take Advantage of the Resources and Support Available to You

Making proper lifestyle choices is important in managing diabetes. In many cases, good nutrition, a healthy weight, physical activity, and regular checkups can help control the disease process. Diabetics should also focus on foot care, blood sugar testing, and taking medications as prescribed to achieve the perfect balance. But ...

**Have you ever considered using a diabetic educator to help you learn to manage your diabetes? Using a diabetic educator can help you to:**

- Develop self-management skills
- Control blood-sugars better
- Improve cholesterol levels
- Reduce blood pressure
- Decrease blurred vision, frequent urination, and/or fatigue
- Lower healthcare costs.



Find out more about diabetic educators, or locate one, on the [American Association of Diabetic Educators website](http://www.diabeteseducator.org/practice/educator-tools/reaching-prescribers).

**What about a self-management program?** Self-management programs can help you to learn more about controlling your diabetes and how to feel better. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/learnmorefeelbetter/programs/diabetes.htm> to find a self-management program in your area.

And did you know there are diabetes **self-management magazines** dedicated to managing the effects of diabetes on everyday life? These magazines often publish self-care tips, articles on diabetes research, and diabetes-friendly recipes.

Costs for these resources vary. The bottom line is, **diabetics who have the information and support they need to manage their diabetes live healthier lives.** Take advantage of the resources that are available to you!

Source: <https://www.diabeteseducator.org/practice/educator-tools/reaching-prescribers>

### PAIN MANAGEMENT FOR DIALYSIS PATIENTS

It comes as no surprise that dialysis patients suffer from pain. How you deal with that pain is important to your overall health. Given the recent news about the opioid epidemic, it's more important than ever to talk about it.

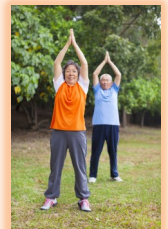
**What are opioids, and how can you avoid having problems with them?**

Opioids are a type of prescription medication used to treat severe pain. Some common ones you might recognize are Vicodin (hydrocodone), OxyContin (oxycodone), Morphine and Methadone. They are often prescribed for pain following surgery, related to cancer, or even chronic pain, such as back pain.

**What to do if you are prescribed an opioid.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that if you are prescribed an opioid by your doctor, start with the lowest dose in the smallest quantity; and that you take them for only short periods of time. The risk of addiction and overdose does exist. The CDC also recommends the following alternatives to opioid medications:

- Medications such as Tylenol or Advil (Be sure to check with your physician before taking any over-the-counter medications.)
- Counseling to learn how to change physical, behavioral and emotional triggers for stress
- Physical therapy
- Medications for depression and seizures
- Injections
- Exercise and weight loss
- Other therapies such as acupuncture and massage



The Network also has a resource, [Keep Comfortable on Dialysis](#), that can help you with ideas to reduce pain without using opioids that can be found on the Network's website under Patients and Family and Treatment Options.

If you or someone you know needs help with opioid misuse or addiction, talk with your doctor or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' national helpline at 1.800.662.HELP, or go to <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

If you have questions about how to voice a concern or grievance, check out this helpful tool created BY patients FOR patients:

### ***The Dialysis Patient Grievance Toolkit***

To file a grievance, contact Network 7 at **1.800.826.3373**.

