

Some facts about peritoneal dialysis catheters

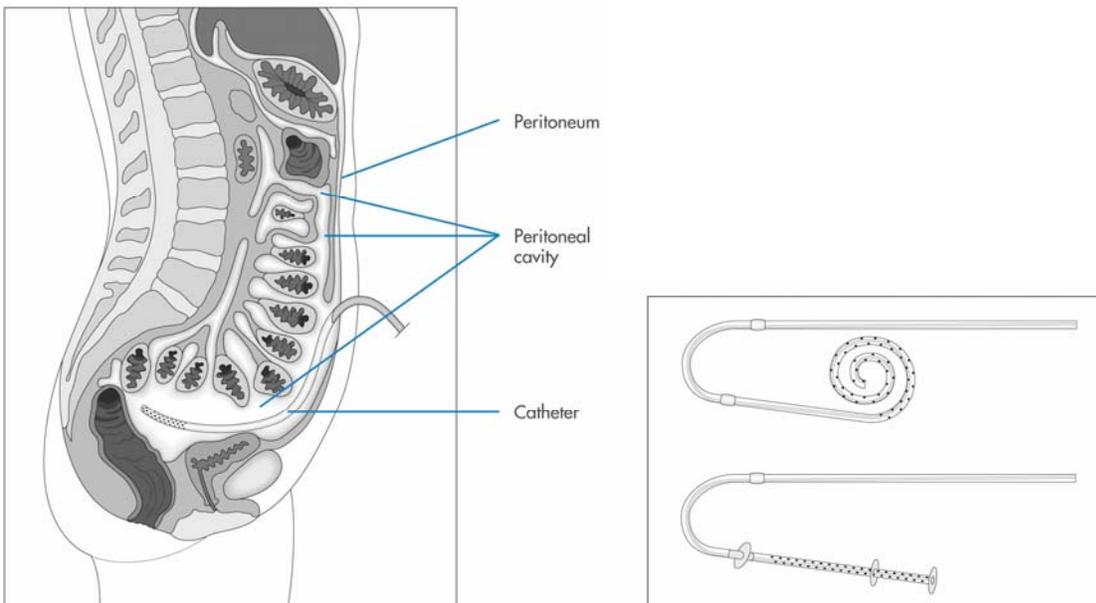
Introduction

In order to have regular peritoneal dialysis (PD), you will need to have a safe and stable access to the peritoneal space (also called the “peritoneal cavity”) inside the abdomen. This is the case whether you are doing manual exchanges of fluid during the day or using a machine to do exchanges while you sleep. The access is achieved through a permanent tube called a peritoneal dialysis catheter.

The peritoneal dialysis catheter

The peritoneal dialysis catheter is a plastic tube that is placed into the peritoneal cavity in your abdomen. It is placed either by a surgeon or a nephrologist. If a surgeon places it, the procedure will occur in an operating room and is usually done under general anesthetic while you are asleep. A nephrologist usually places the tube at the bedside under local anesthetic (freezing) while you are awake. Not all nephrologists are trained to put in these tubes, so this is something you will need to discuss with your nephrology team as part of your planning. You will also discuss with them which placement approach is best for you based on your specific needs.

Usually, the peritoneal dialysis catheter is placed just below your navel (umbilicus) and will remain there as long as you are using this method of dialysis. Approximately 10–15 cm of tubing will remain outside of the skin, and can be tucked into a special belt under your clothing.



Two examples of catheters

Why use a peritoneal dialysis catheter?

The peritoneal dialysis catheter is how we access your peritoneal space. Peritoneal dialysis is a treatment in which a special dialysis fluid bathes the space in your abdomen and removes toxins, water and salts from your body. Since the treatment must occur every day, there must be consistent and easy access to the abdominal cavity.

Once the peritoneal dialysis catheter is in place and the area has healed, it should cause no discomfort or irritation.

Surgery to place the catheter

A surgical procedure is needed to place a peritoneal dialysis catheter. As noted above, it can be placed either by a nephrologist at the bedside using local anesthetic only, or by a surgeon in the operating room while you sleep.

Once the peritoneal dialysis catheter is placed, it takes some time for the tube site to heal before it can be used for peritoneal dialysis, ideally at least two weeks. In the meantime, your nephrology team will “flush” the tube about once a week to make sure it does not get plugged up before it is used for your dialysis treatments.

Care of your peritoneal dialysis catheter

Following the placement of your peritoneal dialysis catheter:

- The surgeon and/or nephrology team will give you instructions about the care of the dressing and when it can be removed.
- They will also tell you when you will need to have an assessment and catheter flushing.
- You should check the incision and exit site (where the tube comes out of the skin) for any discharge, bleeding, swelling or pain. **You should notify your surgeon and/or your nephrology team if any of these things occur.**

Once the incision has healed (about two weeks after surgery):

- Follow any directions provided to you by your nephrology team.
- The team will give you information about bathing and catheter care. This may include catheter dressings, antibiotic ointments, or other care plans designed for your specific needs.

Once you are at home and performing your own peritoneal dialysis:

- Follow any advice given to you by your nephrology team.
- Check the exit site on a daily basis, or as directed by the nephrology team, for changes at the exit site and the tunnel (the space between the exit site and the middle of your abdomen where the tube runs under the skin) for pain, swelling, redness, bleeding or discharge. **If any of these changes occur, contact your nephrology team to decide what should be done next.**

For further information, or if you wish to help us in our efforts, please contact The Kidney Foundation of Canada office in your area. You can also visit our Web site at www.kidney.ca.

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