

Dialysis Away From Base (DAFB) Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is this guidance for?

A: This guidance relates to patients living in England only (or registered with an English GP), who are on some form of dialysis treatment. If you live outside of England (or are registered with a GP outside of England) then you will need to ask your renal team to find out how to organise your dialysis away from base. 'Base' refers to the place where a patient normally has their dialysis treatment.

Q: Is it easy to organise to have DAFB?

A: Whilst it does take some planning for DAFB to take place, the renal team will be able to help you with organising DAFB and there are some useful websites and telephone numbers at the end of this paper that will help. It is best to give as much notice as possible before you plan to go away. This is usually a minimum of 4 weeks for within the UK and 3 months if outside of the UK. Due to the risk of passport issuing delays, it is also advisable to make sure that you have all the relevant travel documents needed for travelling abroad in plenty of time before arranging visits to other countries.

Q: Will I have to pay for my DAFB?

A: No, not in an NHS unit in the UK, nor in those private units with which the NHS has made an agreement to pay, but you will of course have to pay for your travel and accommodation costs. If the unit is private you will need to check that they have an agreement with the NHS, and that that the NHS will therefore pay.

For outside of the UK the rules on whether you have to pay are different depending on where you dialyse.

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) card allows you to access state-provided healthcare in all European Economic Area (EEA) countries. The EHIC is available free of charge at the following web site <https://www.ehic.org.uk/Internet/startApplication.do> or phone 0300 3301350.

However, please be aware, that in some countries, for example, France and Switzerland there may be a percentage payment system. It is therefore important to check this before you confirm the booking for your stay. The following website will have up to date information available.

<http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcareabroad/plannedtreatment/pages/introduction.aspx>

This will mean that you will need to pay a proportion of the cost of the provision of holiday haemodialysis.

If the renal unit you will be using within the EEA is not a state-provided renal unit you will need to pay for the dialysis treatment sessions yourself. However if this is the case, you will need to apply before you go away for a partial or full refund from the European Cross Border Healthcare team of NHS England at

nhs.cb.europeanhealthcare@nhs.net under a European directive known as Article 56. You can expect to be refunded up to the cost of what the National Health Service (NHS) pays for dialysis but you will only receive this refund after you have been away. Applying before will help you to understand the amount to be refunded, and it is likely that the amount will not cover the cost of the holiday dialysis. **This will mean that you will need to pay the excess costs as the cost of the dialysis will probably be more than what the NHS pays for dialysis.** You will need to forward the original receipts and proof of payment when you come back in order to receive the refund.

There are a number of other countries with which the UK has a reciprocal healthcare agreement. Please check the following website link for the countries. Treatment must be arranged in advance, at a state dialysis centre. In most cases, this will either be free or at a reduced cost to the patient. You will need to check before you confirm your booking if there are any additional charges for you.

<http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcareabroad/countryguide/non-eea-countries/page/non-eea-countries.aspx>.

For haemodialysis outside of the EEA or a country with a reciprocal healthcare agreement you will be expected to pay the full cost of the treatment. DAFB outside of EEA or reciprocal countries may not be regulated by a country's health policy, and you will need to make checks about the quality of the service. Before you book your dialysis you need to check for example, the type of dialysis service provided, the number of doctor and nursing staff, machines, back up machines provided, and the experience of the renal team in providing dialysis. For some destinations it may be wise to take some of the consumables used in dialysis with you, this needs to be agreed with your usual renal unit.

Q: Can I have cruise-ship holiday dialysis?

A: Yes, subject to clinical approval. If the cruise (river or ocean going) is within the boundaries of, or the majority of the cruise ports of call are to an EEA country or a country with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement, then you can be reimbursed up to the cost of the NHS tariff. You will need to get approval from your renal team before you go on your cruise for the reimbursement as they will refund you on your return. This will help you to know how much of the cost of the dialysis on the cruise will be paid to you as it may not cover the total cost of the dialysis. You will need to forward receipts and proof of payment when you return.

DAFB on a cruise ship is classed as being outside of EEA or a reciprocal country and therefore may not be regulated by a country's health policy. You will need to make checks about the quality of the service before you book your dialysis on a cruise ship. You could check, for example, the type of dialysis service provided, number of staff, machines, provision of back up machines, and the experience of the renal team in providing dialysis etc. You also need to make sure that the cruise company has your clinical information, and will also update your renal team on the dialysis treatment you received on your return. You must have adequate travel insurance to cover you whilst on a cruise ship as NHS England will only pay up to the cost of the renal dialysis tariff and will not pay for any other health care costs.

For cruises outside of these countries you will have to pay for the total cost of dialysis yourself.

Q: Will I get my usual transport to and from dialysis?

A: You will need to check that there is transport available at the unit that you are planning to use for the times that you will be dialysing there. If you meet the eligibility criteria for having transport provided to and from dialysis sessions at your home unit, you may be able to receive this transport free of charge but this is in England only. Your renal team can help with finding out about what the transport arrangements are before you book your DAFB.

Q: Can I dialyse at a private dialysis facility in England.

A: Yes but only free of charge so long as that private facility has an agreement with NHS England.

Q: Can any dialysis patient go on holiday?

A: No. A decision has to be made whether a patient is suitable to dialyse at another facility and whether they are clinically well enough to travel (e.g. a patient with complex needs who normally receives haemodialysis at a main renal centre would not usually be able to dialyse at a nurse led satellite unit).

Q: As a patient can I arrange dialysis away from base myself?

A: We advise patients to make use of their 'holiday coordinator' or named nurse when arranging DAFB. Freedom Dialysis may be able to offer some practical advice and find a slot within the UK through their 'swap' scheme www.dialysisfreedom.co.uk. They also provide help and information on DAFB outside of the UK.

Q: What happens if I cannot get dialysis where I want it?

A: Unfortunately dialysis capacity at some locations is scarce and you may have to consider looking at dialysis further away from your initial destination, so we advise booking as far in advance as possible.

Q: How often can I have DAFB?

A: There is unrestricted access to DAFB, subject to availability etc and as long as you are considered suitable and well enough to dialyse at another facility. **The frequency and length of sessions of DAFB may be different from your normal routine and this is something you will need to understand before you confirm your DAFB.**

Q: Will I be suspended from the transplant list if I go on holiday?

A: You may be suspended from the transplant list if you travel to a location outside the UK where getting back quickly enough to your Transplant Centre will be a problem. This may also be the case if the location within UK is in a location which getting back quickly enough will be difficult, such as the highlands of Scotland. You will need to speak to your renal team to find out if you will be suspended. It is important that the donor co-ordinator is aware that you will be away and where you will be. If you have been away to a country that is deemed as high risk of blood borne viruses, such as hepatitis B, you will be suspended from the transplant list for 3 months after you return. It is important that you update the transplant co-ordinator if your plans change and to confirm on your return that you are re-activated on the transplant list, following general health and infection control checks being completed.

Q: Are there any specific policies in place for infection control?

A: Yes. The Department of Health updated guidelines in 2010, with a specific mention of Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and DAFB; and some units/regions have their own additional policies. These will only apply to United Kingdom (UK) and although other countries will have similar guidelines these may not be as strict as the UK guidelines. There is a particular risk of BBV in South East Asia, Africa and the Middle East. To find out more about this you will need to see your renal doctor or nurse.

Q: What should I do about medication?

A: It is advisable to plan what medications you will need to cover your stay and take those with you. If travelling by plane you should consider putting your medications in your hand luggage and check with travel providers what their policies (if any) are on carrying/declaring medications and medical equipment. If you are able to carry a repeat prescription with you that should provide practical evidence;

Q: Do I need travel insurance?

A: Yes. It is very important that you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance to cover you whilst you are away from the UK. The potential charges that you would have to pay if you required any additional medical treatment whilst away could easily run into thousands of pounds. It is important to check the small print for any exclusions that may apply for health care abroad that is covered under the insurance policy.

In the light of the current passport issuing delays, to ensure all relevant travel documents needed for travelling abroad are obtained or are up to date before arranging visits to other countries.

Q: Am I allowed to take the dialysis equipment I need on the plane with me?

A: By equipment this includes dialysis machines and also any dialysis consumables you may have given to use whilst you are away. Under European law, disabled people and other people with reduced mobility have legal rights to assistance when travelling **by air**. Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 sets out two essential goals: first, preventing unfair treatment, that is refusal of carriage on the basis of reduced mobility and, second, guaranteeing the provision, free of charge, of the assistance that passengers with reduced mobility need to have for air travel.

Q: What assistance am I entitled to when travelling by air?

A: The following services should be available at all European airports for persons with a sensory, physical or learning disability which affects mobility when using transport:

- Facilities to summon assistance at designated arrival points, such as at terminal entrances, at transport interchanges and in car parks
- Assistance to reach check-in
- Help with registration at check-in
- Assistance with moving through the airport, including to toilets if required
- Help with getting on and off the plane
- Free carriage of medical equipment and up to two items of mobility equipment
- A briefing for you and any escort or companion on emergency procedures and the layout of the cabin
- Help with stowing and retrieving baggage on the plane
- Assistance with moving to the toilet on the plane (some planes will have an on-board wheelchair)

- Someone to meet you off the plane and help you reach connecting flights or get to the next part of your journey

This means that if you are flying within the EEA you will not be charged for carrying your dialysis equipment with you. If you are flying outside of the EEA you will need to check in advance who you are travelling with as the companies have different policies and they may charge you.

Below are some useful websites and contact telephone numbers:-

British Kidney Patient Association.
(for assistance with holiday grants).
www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk
Tel. 01420 541424.

Freedom Holidays.
(for dialysis 'swap' scheme information).
www.dialysisfreedom.co.uk
Tel. 01509 808668.
and
www.holidaydialysis.co.uk
Tel. 01509 815999,
(for details of holiday destinations with dialysis facilities).

National Kidney Federation.
(for general advice and information including travel insurance companies).
www.kidney.org.uk
'Helpline' 0845 6010209.
Calls to this number from UK landlines are free of charge.
Opening hours. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Global Dialysis
(for information and patient feedback on dialysis units around the world)
www.globaldialysis.com