



Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: What happens when other patients are in the hospital, or die?

A: At dialysis, you get to know other patients who ride with you to clinic, wait with you in the waiting room, or sit near you during treatment. If one of those people is not there at the usual time, it's normal to worry.

Keeping patient privacy: You may wonder why no one will tell you where your friend is. You may even think the staff doesn't care. This is not true. A new federal law requires staff to protect patients' privacy. Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accessibility Act (HIPAA), information can be given out only with a patient's written permission.

If the clinic manager agrees, patients at your clinic can sign release forms to allow staff to tell other patients if one of you goes to the hospital or passes away. This will also allow the center to put a notice on the bulletin board or honor a patient who passes away—or even to celebrate a transplant.

Other information sources: It may make you feel better to offer support by visiting a friend in the hospital, sending a card, or attending a memorial service if a friend dies. When you become close to other patients, you can trade phone numbers if you like, so you can stay in touch on your own.

What I can do if someone from my clinic is gone:

- Sign a HIPAA release form that lets the staff tell other patients where I am.
- Talk with my social worker about a peer support group at my clinic to help patients cope with loss.
- Ask my clinic administrator if they could circulate a card for everyone to sign, or send a group envelope of cards from the staff and patients to a patient or family.
- Visit module 5 of Kidney School™: *Coping with Kidney Disease* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more about working through my concerns.