

Consumer Qs and As
for Dialysis Facility Compare

Question: What is Dialysis Facility Compare?

Answer: Medicare's Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC) is a website tool on www.Medicare.gov that allows consumers, mainly patients with kidney disease and their family or friends, to find information about Medicare-approved dialysis facilities across the nation, as well as other kidney resources.

Question: What is the purpose of DFC?

Answer: To compare characteristics, services, and quality information about dialysis facilities. This important information can help dialysis patients choose the dialysis facility that best meets their needs. Patients who are already on dialysis can look up information about the facility they use and discuss it with their dialysis caregiver. When information about dialysis facilities is posted on a website, it also encourages the facilities to continuously improve the quality of the services they provide.

Question: Who should use DFC?

Answer: People with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) who need or will need dialysis in the future will find useful information and resources about dialysis and dialysis facilities on DFC. A patient's family members and friends are encouraged to explore the website as well. Dialysis professionals such as social workers and nurses can help patients find a facility when they travel, or help new patients explore the site to learn about dialysis. Dialysis professionals can also compare their facility with others in their area

Question: What are the characteristics and services listed on DFC?

Answer: The facility characteristics and services listed on DFC include:

- address and telephone number of the facility,
- the facility's initial date of Medicare certification,

- shifts starting at 5 PM or later (if you need your treatments in the evening),
- the number of treatment stations,
- the types of dialysis offered (in-center hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and home hemodialysis training),
- facility ownership type (profit or non-profit), and
- corporate name (if applicable).

Question: What is the “quality information” on DFC, and why should I look at it?

Answer: The “quality information” or quality measures on DFC tell you about the quality of care that dialysis facilities provide. On DFC, you can find these quality measures:

- hemodialysis adequacy (how well facilities clean their patients’ blood during hemodialysis),
- anemia management (how well facilities treat their patients’ low red blood cell count),
- and patient survival (do patients in this facility generally live as long as expected?).

Dialysis facilities differ in the quality of care they give to their patients. Using these measures, consumers can compare dialysis facilities to see how they are different from one another. The measures should be used with other information from the State Survey Agency, ESRD Network, from a visit to the dialysis facility and from other sources. Contact information for these agencies can be found on DFC.

Patients should talk to their doctor or dialysis facility staff about the quality information. The quality measures on DFC are valid, reasonable, and provide useful information for people who would like to compare different dialysis facilities.

Question: Where does the information or data on Dialysis Facility Compare come from?

Answer: The information or data on Dialysis Facility Compare comes from two sources of Medicare data:

1. Standard Information Management System (SIMS) – this database contains information like the facility name, address, and telephone number, and information about people with Medicare who have ESRD.
2. Renal Management Information System (REMIS) / Program Management and Medical Information System (PMMIS) – this database includes: Demographic (age, race, sex, etc.), medical claims, payment and entitlement data on people with Medicare who have ESRD; Certification and other information for Medicare-approved ESRD providers

Question: How often is the information on Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC) updated?

Answer: The information on DFC is updated on a regular basis. The characteristics and services information is updated monthly. The quality measures are updated annually.

Question: What other resources are available on Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC)?

Answer: Besides the dialysis facility search and compare features, the following resources are available on DFC:

- Links to national kidney disease and kidney transplant organizations that contain important educational programs and materials for adults and children with kidney disease.
- A kidney disease dictionary.
- A list of a dialysis patient's rights and responsibilities
- Useful contact information for the ESRD Networks and State Survey Agencies who help dialysis facilities to improve the care they give and who help patients when they have questions, concerns and complaints.
- Frequently Asked Questions about DFC.

Question: How do consumers get to the Dialysis Facility Compare site?

Answer: Consumers can go to www.medicare.gov and scroll down under Search Tools to *Compare Dialysis Facilities in Your Area* or the following link will take you directly to the site: www.medicare.gov/dialysis/home.asp.