

# PatientLine



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## *New Orleans is steeped in music.*

*From the street parades and blues cafes to marching brass bands, it is a mixture of cultures that are at the heart and soul of America. We believe New Orleans and the other affected communities are strong, and will survive. We wish to extend our deepest support to the people of the Gulf Coast. Our heartfelt condolences go out to all the victims of Hurricane Katrina, especially our patients, staff, and their families. We hope that your lives are soon rebuilt.*

*This special issue of PatientLine is dedicated to those affected by the storm. We will return with a regular issue of the newsletter in the upcoming months.*

## Features

2

**How to Cope**

3

**Stories from the Patient Response Line**

4

**Fresenius Staff Put Patients First**

Insert

**Emergency Planning**

**Prepare An Emergency Meal Plan**



## How to Cope

It's normal to react to tragedy with sadness, shock, anger, worry, and fear, or any combination of these emotions. You may feel sad because you or someone you know has lost a job or a home, angry that people were not taken care of sooner, or afraid a disaster could strike near you, or someone you love.

Many of us are feeling these same things, but there are some things you can do for yourself and your family during this time:

- Recognize your own feelings
- Talk to others; it will help relieve your stress
- Accept help from others
- Volunteer to help
- Be as physically active as possible
- Listen to music, take a walk, or do something else that feels healing



Be sure to only donate to well-known relief agencies.

### **How to Find Family and Friends**

Unfortunately, the law will not allow us to give anyone information about specific patients, but if you are trying to locate someone, the Red Cross Family News Network has a toll-free hotline for finding family members. Call 1-877-568-3317.

### **How You Can Help**

Checks to help dialysis patients may be mailed to:  
American Kidney Fund  
6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 1010  
Rockville, MD 20852

If you would like to donate clothing or supplies, or volunteer, contact your local chapter of the Red Cross.  
1-800-HELP NOW



## Emergency Planning

While we can never be ready for everything, it's important to be as prepared as possible for emergencies, whether they are natural disasters, a medical emergency, or something else. This can be especially challenging for dialysis patients. Since we never know when a disaster will strike, one of the best ways for dialysis patients to prepare for an emergency is to read Chapter 10 of the Fresenius Medical Care Patient Handbook. In this chapter, you will find detailed information that will help you plan for events that could interfere with your treatments. Included are tips for home and in-center hemodialysis patients, peritoneal patients and diabetics on everything from evacuation, to supplies to stock, to meal planning.

As a Fresenius patient, you can be sure we will always do everything in our power to make sure you receive timely dialysis treatments, even during an emergency. During Hurricane Katrina, we dialyzed patients ahead of the predicted storm day, and established special emergency lines to direct any dialysis patient who called to the nearest functioning site of care, and every effort was made to contact patients who did not check in. While more than 40 facilities were affected by the storm, only 12 of the most severely damaged were down for more than 48 hours.

If you don't have a Patient Handbook or would like a new copy, be sure and ask for one when you go to your next treatment.



## Prepare An Emergency Meal Plan

**The best place to begin your emergency meal planning is by talking to your nephrologist or dietitian.**

It is very important to have correct foods during a natural disaster or any emergency where dialysis is not available during a short period of time. This includes times when weather is too bad for safe travel.

The sample daily diet below is stricter than the "normal" renal diet but it gives you "safe" suggestions until dialysis is again available to you.

- 2-3 ounces of salt-free canned meat
- 2-4 servings of bread and cereal/pasta choices
- ½ cup of canned vegetables
- three ½ cups of canned fruit
- 1/3 cup of evaporated, whole, canned milk
- 6 or more servings of fat, such as salt-free salad dressing, margarine, or oil
- High calorie foods, as desired  
(choose from those that don't spoil and are allowed in your usual renal diet)

Keep a copy of your Emergency Daily Meal Plan with your food supplies or in your emergency kit.

If you are diabetic, talk to your dietitian about how to change this meal plan to fit your diabetic diet. In case of low blood sugar reactions, have a supply of glucose tablets, juice boxes and hard candy in your kit.

Tips for food planning during an emergency:

- Plan to cut down your fluids to about ½ of what it is normal for you.  
If you usually go over your fluid limit, cut back even more.
- Keep sugarless gum, sugarless hard candy, or mouthwash on hand to control thirst.
- Keep at least a half loaf of bread per person frozen.  
If the electricity is out, remove the bread the first day and don't refreeze.
- Open your refrigerator only when really needed when your electricity is out.
- Once you've opened a can of tuna or chicken, use only the amount you need right away and throw away the rest unless the item can be refrigerated at the right temperature.

## Stories from the Patient Response Line

Over 350 Fresenius patients have been affected in some way by Hurricane Katrina. You know living with dialysis is a struggle. Can you imagine facing this struggle with no place to live, no belongings, no community? That's what many of our patients are dealing with right now, in the aftermath of the storm.

Many have lost everything, some have been luckier, but all have been touched in some way. Below are three of their stories from the FMCNA Patient Emergency Response Line.

A patient evacuated from Louisiana to Alabama during the storm. In the process, she lost track of her best friend, who she regularly dialyzed with. Sick with worry, she contacted the Response Line, hoping to get any information on her dear friend's condition or whereabouts. After a few calls to local facilities, the Response Line volunteer was able to track down the friend, who had been relocated from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. A social worker was then able to connect the separated friends through their new contact information.

The wife of a Louisiana peritoneal dialysis patient made a frantic phone call to the Response Line. She and her husband had fled Louisiana for the safety of her sister's home in Texas. He was running out of supplies for his treatments, like bags of solution and clamps. Understandably, his wife was very anxious, estimating that he had enough only for 2 to 3 more days. To make matters worse, one of his clamps had broken, leaving him open to the possibility of infection. The volunteer who took the call was able to put the patient's wife in touch with the PD customer service line in the area, and they received the supplies they needed in time. The wife was then able to return to their home in Louisiana to check out the damage knowing her husband was safe.

A 75-year old woman who lives in Gulfport, MS was without phone service and unable to leave her home for 5 or 6 days. At her last treatment before the hurricane, she was given the phone number for the FMCNA Patient Emergency Response Line. As soon as her phone service was working, sounding out of breath and weak, it was the first call she made. Her regular facility, Orange Grove, was up and running, but she had no way to get there. The facility called 911 but they said unless she was very ill, they would not be able to help her due to other, higher-priority cases. As a backup plan, arrangements were made by the facility Clinical Manager to send a transport driver to get her, but when he arrived, she didn't answer her door. Everyone on the Emergency Response Line was quite concerned and hoped for the best when she didn't answer her phone. Days later, the coordinator of the Patient Emergency Response Line reached the facility, and the Clinical Manager told her that an ambulance arrived that day for the patient before the driver from the facility got there, and took her to a hospital. She received an emergency dialysis treatment that day, and she is now doing fine, dialyzing in Orange Grove on her regular treatment schedule.

Thankfully, these stories have happy endings, but we know there are others that do not. Our thoughts are with the victims of Katrina and their friends and families.



“Family villages” of RVs were set up near operating dialysis facilities for Fresenius Medical Care employees and their families so they could continue to care for patients.



**Please send PatientLine comments and story ideas to Hilary Thorne at [hilary.thorne@fmc-na.com](mailto:hilary.thorne@fmc-na.com)**

**Editor**  
Hilary Thorne

**Art Direction**  
Renée Sevelitte

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## Fresenius Staff Put Patients First

Since Hurricane Katrina struck, we have been working to take care of our staff so that our staff can take care of patients. Like others in the area, many of our staff lost everything. Their dedication to their patients, even though their own homes have been destroyed, families separated, belongings wiped out, has been truly amazing.

With the help of "Fresenius villages" for staff and their families to live in, a Patient Emergency Response Line, 1,000 volunteers, and a network of open dialysis centers, our Disaster Response Team has been able to make sure every patient who has contacted us needing dialysis has been helped.

Our Response Line became active on August 29, the day Katrina hit New Orleans and Mississippi. Since then we have received approximately 800 calls from patients and people looking for help. Through the Response Line we have been able to help callers find treatment, food, secure transportation, and have treated about 600 displaced patients in functioning facilities. We will continue to staff the hotline until it is no longer needed for our patients. Our Response Line also serves patients who do not regularly receive treatments from a Fresenius facility.

Without the generosity of nearby communities such as Mobile, AL, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Hammond, and LaPlace, LA, and Jackson and Gulfport MS, we would not have been able to assist as many patients. We are especially grateful to the Sims Baptist Church in Alabama, located across the street from our West Mobile Alabama unit, who helped us set up a "headquarters" where displaced employees, patients, and their families from the Gulf Coast area could find supplies, shelter and treatment.