Why peritoneal dialysis works for me

After doing in-center hemodialysis for more than 20 years, I decided it was time to go back to the peritoneal dialysis (PD) treatment.

JENNIFER CASTILLO — AUGUST 13, 2015

Castillo at work in her home office

After doing in-center hemodialysis for more than 20 years, I decided it was time to go back to the peritoneal dialysis (PD) treatment. I had used PD in the 1980s. The decision to make the change back to PD seemed best for me. PD is performed daily which results in slow, gentle dialysis. Because PD
is done this way, as opposed to three or four times a week in the hemodialysis center, there is a constant removal of excess toxins and fluid, which is much easier on me as the patient.

Related: Can peritoneal dialysis be a long-term therapy?

Also doing home dialysis on my own schedule eliminates the commute to the medical center. In addition, PD affords me more freedom in my diet. Now I am able to drink more beverages and eat mashed potatoes, French fries, honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelon, tasty Florida oranges, and tomatoes. These were foods that were carefully measured and restricted while I was on hemodialysis. Having meals at regular times keeps my body on an even schedule, which helps me to take my routine daily medications. Ultimately, that means I will have better and more consistent laboratory results.

I have always viewed dealing with dialysis as a part time permanent job with no time off for good behavior.

Ideally, dialysis should be a warm, comfortable experience. Most hemodialysis centers are kept quite cool for the comfort of the staff that move about constantly throughout their shift. Doing dialysis at home gives me the option to control my environment and be comfortable. Nothing can beat the comforts of home. No more air conditioning in the winter or heat in the summer. Now if I need a blanket, I have one handy and don’t have to carry it to the unit along with food and other items to keep busy during my treatment.

My own routine

At home, I have a routine with everything needed for comfort. Should I need something, my caregiver husband can help me with it or I can disconnect and get it myself if necessary, then reconnect to complete the treatment. If the PD machine hiccups and becomes cranky (it’s basically a computer) help is only a phone call away 24/7. Those savvy technicians have never failed me in the six years I have been doing this treatment.

To complement the on-call technicians, there is a team of doctors and nurses to assist in dealing with any unexpected issues that may pop up. I visit my nephrologist and nurses monthly so they can review my treatment progress and blood work. One of the most rewarding aspects of home care is the independence and control I gain because I am trained to solve treatment issues that may emerge. I am thereby participating in the success of my own health care regimen. Life certainly has many gifts.