

students with end stage renal disease

What is renal failure?

Renal failure happens when the kidneys are damaged and can no longer work properly. This damage may be temporary or permanent. Children may show no symptoms until about 80% of kidney function is lost. End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) is the final stage of kidney failure, where the kidneys stop working completely. Children with ESRD need either dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive.

- **Peritoneal Dialysis:** Uses the lining of the abdomen (peritoneal membrane) to filter the blood. It offers more flexibility and fewer dietary restrictions. Treatments take 8–10 hours daily.
- **Hemodialysis:** Filters blood outside the body using a machine. Treatments last about 4 hours and are done 2–3 times per week. This method requires strict limits on fluid, phosphorus, and salt intake.

How can ESRD affect a student at school?

Children with ESRD may experience learning challenges due to the buildup of waste in the body, which can affect brain and nerve function. Children may struggle in the following areas:

- **Academic:** attention, language development, motor skills, cognitive development, attendance
- **Social/Emotional:** low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, irritability
- **Physical:** small stature, dietary restrictions, cramping, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, anemia, bone pain, insomnia, itching, dry skin, urinary tract infections, incontinence, possible hearing loss, neurological issues such as restless leg syndrome

How can schools support students with ESRD?

Academic

- Start academic interventions under **Section 504** or **IDEA** (Other Health Impairment).
- Conduct evaluations for **speech, OT/PT, vision/hearing, assistive technology**.
- Adjust schedules to **avoid missing core subjects** due to medical appointments.
- Offer **intermittent homebound** instruction for extended absences.
- Allow **extra time** for assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests.
- Assign a **manageable workload** focused on **quality over quantity**.
- Offer **preferential seating** to reduce distractions.
- Maintain **consistent communication** with families (emails, progress notes, conferences).

Social and Emotional

- Create opportunities for **academic and social success** and highlight the student's strengths to build confidence.
- Evaluate the **need for counseling** if the student becomes withdrawn or struggles socially.
- Provide **staff training** and share relevant information about the condition.

Physical

- Maintain **consistent communication** with school nurse to monitor medical needs.
- Modify or excuse from **strenuous physical activities** and **contact sports**.
- Allow **water bottles** and snack breaks during the day.
- Offer **unrestricted bathroom access**.
- Give **extra time to travel between classes** without penalty.
- Provide **two sets of textbooks** (home and school) to reduce fatigue.
- Avoid **prolonged sun exposure**.
- Be aware of the **arteriovenous fistula (AVF)** used for dialysis—never take blood pressure on that arm.

More Resources

- **American Association of Kidney Patients**
aakp.org
- **National Kidney Foundation**
kidney.org
- **Nemours Kids Health**
kidshealth.org

SCHOOL SERVICES

For more information, visit childrens.com/school-services

