KIDNEY FUNCTION
Normally the kidneys clean the blood and remove extra fluid from the body in the form of urine.

WHAT IS IT AND WHY MIGHT I NEED IT?
Hemodialysis replaces some of these functions when the kidneys no longer function properly. You need dialysis if your kidneys no longer remove enough wastes and fluid from your blood to keep you healthy. This usually happens when you have only 10 to 15 percent of your kidney function left. You may have symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, swelling and fatigue.

HOW DOES IT WORK?
During hemodialysis, a dialysis machine and a filter called an artificial kidney are used to cleanse your blood. In order to deliver your blood to the dialyzer, an access is needed. This can be done with minor surgery, usually called a fistula or graft which is placed in your arm.

The filter has two parts, one for your blood and one for a washing fluid called dialysate. A thin membrane separates these two parts. Blood cells, protein and other important things remain in your blood because they are too big to pass through the membrane. Smaller waste products in the blood, such as urea, creatinine, potassium and extra fluid pass through the membrane and are washed away.

WHERE CAN IT BE DONE?
Hemodialysis can be done in a hospital, in a dialysis center that is not part of a hospital or at home. You and your doctor will decide which place is best, based on your medical condition, and your wishes. In a dialysis center, hemodialysis is usually done 3 times per week for about 4 hours at a time. People who choose to do hemodialysis at home may do dialysis treatment more frequently.