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## Dialysis center here to serve Merced patients

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End-stage kidney failure is no fun for anyone, and now there's another dialysis center in Merced to help those patients.

Satellite Dialysis of Merced will open this month and is hosting an open house Wednesday for patients, health professionals and interested folks.

Susie Soares-Phillips, regional director of operations for Satellite, said the company got its start in Stanford, and then expanded to Modesto and Turlock.

"We had patients who were driving to Modesto for dialysis," Soares-Phillips said. "This is the first clinic we have in Merced."

Healthy kidneys clean the blood by removing excess fluid, minerals and wastes. They also make hormones that keep bones strong and blood healthy.

When the kidneys are damaged, they don't work properly, and that's where dialysis comes in.

"The damage we see primarily comes from either diabetes or high blood pressure," Soares-Phillips said. "Those two diseases are so prevalent in the Central Valley."

Both diseases can be traced back to obesity, which Soares-Phillips said is also a major concern in the Valley.

"Diabetes attacks the kidneys by causing nerve damage," Soares-Phillips said. "High blood pressure affects the function of the kidneys."

Some patients on dialysis have catheters in their arteries and veins that are hooked up to machines that clean the blood. Soares-Phillips said most patients come in three times a week, and spend about 3½ hours each time on the machine. Every chair in the center has its own television, to help patients pass the time.

The dialysis center does both hemodialysis, where the veins and arteries are hooked up to a blood-cleaning machine by tubes, and peritoneal dialysis, where fluid is introduced through a permanent tube in the abdomen and then flushed out.

Although there are other dialysis clinics in Merced, Soares-Phillips believes with the increase of diabetes and high blood pressure, there is room for another clinic.

"We did studies, and we saw a need for this clinic," Soares-Phillips said.

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### SUN-STAR PHOTO BY LISA JAMES

Standing next to a dialysis machine, Susie Soares-Phillips, regional director of operations for Satellite Healthcare, explains the process of hemodialysis, the artificial process which cleans the blood when a person's kidneys are unable to do so.