

Focus On Medications

Living Healthy. Living Well.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I know which over-the-counter medications are safe and which ones are not safe for people with kidney failure?
- Do all of my healthcare providers know which medications I am taking?
- Do I know when, how, and why I am taking my medications?

If you are not sure or do not know the answers to these questions,

READ ON!

Because of the many causes of kidney disease, every person's treatment is individualized. It is up to you to learn about the medications you are taking and to take them exactly as directed to maximize their effectiveness.

Here are the questions you should ask your doctor:

- What is this medication?
 - Why am I taking it?
 - How should I take it?
 - How often should I take it?
 - What are the possible side effects of this medication?
- It is important that you take only the medications that your physician prescribes for you.
- Your renal team and all your healthcare professionals, including your dentist and eye doctor, should know all of the medications you are taking, even home remedies, herbal preparations, and over-the-counter medications.
- Kidney damage may cause medications to work differently in your body. If you need to take something for a headache, constipation, insomnia, or a cold, ask your physician for a recommendation.

Here are some tips to help you deal with your medications:

- Select one pharmacy and stick with it. The pharmacist can become familiar with your treatment plan and help you with questions about medications. The pharmacist can also inform you of any side effects and possible drug interactions.
- Ask if buying two or three months of medication at a time is cheaper.
- Never accept substitutions without consulting with your physician.
- Always carry an updated list of your medications with you at all times.
- Establish a routine. Pick specific times to take your medications and stick to the schedule.

- Dialysis will remove some medications from the body as it cleans your blood. Ask your physician what medications should not be taken before your dialysis sessions.
- Many blood pressure medications are removed on dialysis, or should not be taken before dialysis because of the effect of dialysis on lowering blood pressure. If you are taking medication for blood pressure, be sure to ask when the best time is for taking it.

Medications to avoid:

- Fleet® Enemas..... High in phosphorus
- Pepto- Bismol®.....High in aluminum and magnesium
- Milk of Magnesia®.....High in aluminum and magnesium
- Mylanta®..... High in aluminum and magnesium
- Maalox®.....High in aluminum and magnesium
- Alka Seltzer®..... High in aluminum and magnesium
- Some non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, such as Ibuprofen.
- Some decongestants

Vitamins:

All dialysis patients need to be on a multi-vitamin. However, you should take only the vitamins prescribed by your physician. Most over-the-counter vitamins are not appropriate for dialysis patients and can, in fact, be harmful if taken.

Medications given during dialysis:

Many patients are given medications into the bloodlines during dialysis. The following is a common list of IV medications that may be given to you during your dialysis treatment.

- EPOGEN: A hormone that is needed to increase the production of red blood cells and treat anemia (low blood count).
- HECTORAL or ZEMPLAR: Vitamin D, to assist with the absorption of calcium and keep bones strong.
- VENOFER: Iron preparation to keep your iron stores adequate so EPOGEN can work building red blood cells.

Phosphorus binders:

Almost all dialysis patients will need to take phosphorus binders. They are one of the most important medications that you take. Your bone health depends on it! Phosphorus binders need to be taken with all food. They are only effective if they are taken when the food is in your stomach. The medication binds with the phosphorus in the food you eat, and excretes it through the GI tract. Some common phosphorus binders are: TUMS®, PhosLo®, Renvela®.

Please take a moment to answer these True/False questions with your primary nurse.

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| 1. <u>All</u> over-the-counter medications are safe for dialysis patients to take. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. Blood pressure medications may be removed from the blood during dialysis. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. Vitamins taken by dialysis patients should be only prescribed by the physician. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. Milk of Magnesia® is OK for dialysis patients to take for constipation. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Phosphorus binders should be taken when food is in the stomach. | TRUE | FALSE |