



# Medicines for people having dialysis



## What is this leaflet about?

Medicines can be used to help with your symptoms if you are having haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis. This leaflet is designed to give you more information about some of your most commonly prescribed medicines and some of their possible side effects. For more information ask your doctor or pharmacist.





## What types of medicines may I need?

Some of the most common medicines that you may be prescribed include:

### Medicines that reduce itching

Antihistamines are used to reduce itching which is a common symptom of CKD that can happen as waste products build up in your body. There are many types available, and some can be bought from your pharmacist. Do not take antihistamines from your doctor and those you have bought – that would be twice the recommended dose! Antihistamines include chlorphenamine, hydroxyzine, loratadine and cetirizine.

**Note:** these medicines are not always effective, and may make you drowsy. It may be better to have an increased dialysis dose which is effective at removing the waste products that are making you feel itchy.

### Medicines that relieve constipation

Lactulose, senna, docusate or fybogel are given to treat or prevent constipation. They can be taken once or twice a day. They may take a day or so to be effective. Side effects include belching or stomach cramps.

**Note:** these are commonly prescribed to patients on peritoneal dialysis. Fybogel should not be taken if you are on a fluid restriction.



### **Medicines to treat infections caused by bacteria**

Haemodialysis patients may need antibiotics to treat any haemodialysis line infections. Antibiotics including gentamicin and vancomycin can be given into your blood stream. They are usually given as an injection into the dialysis machine and blood levels need to be measured. Other antibiotics may be used depending on the bacteria involved.

Peritoneal dialysis patients may suffer with peritonitis – an infection of the thin inner lining of the abdomen. Antibiotics including gentamicin, vancomycin and ciprofloxacin may be used to treat this. They are usually given as a course of treatment, either directly into your bloodstream through a needle inserted into your arm or into the dialysis fluid. Blood levels may need to be measured to see when another dose is needed. Other antibiotics may be used depending on the bacteria involved.



### **Medicines to prevent clotting while you are haemodialysis**

Medicines such as heparin or low-molecular weight heparin (e.g. dalteparin, enoxaparin) are used to thin your blood to allow it to pass easily through the dialysis machine without clotting. The dose will be adjusted depending on your weight and if you have problems with clotting or bleeding on haemodialysis.

### **Medicines to stop blocks in your haemodialysis catheter**

At the end of dialysis, a solution will be injected into your haemodialysis catheter to prevent blood clotting and infections. It stays there until the next haemodialysis session. There are different types of solutions which contain antibiotics (Taurolock), citrate (Citrolock) or Heparin.



### **Hepatitis B vaccination**

You are advised to have hepatitis vaccinations before you need dialysis. This is a viral infection spread through infected blood or bodily fluids so dialysis increasing the risk slightly.

### **Medicines to treat cramps**

Sometimes dialysis patients suffer with cramps. Cramp can be caused by taking large amounts of fluid off on haemodialysis or by not having enough fluid in your blood stream for example coming off dialysis below your dry weight. So your dry weight may be adjusted if you have lost body (flesh) weight to help with this. Speak to your dialysis nurse about your weight if you have any concerns. If you are putting a lot of weight on between haemodialysis sessions, watch your fluid intake and have a chat with your dietician about tips to reduce the amount of water you drink.



### **Medicines to relieve pain**

Paracetamol is fine to take for all CKD patients. Co-codamol or co-dydramol are also safe, but you may need a smaller dose. Anti-inflammatory tablets (such as ibuprofen ('Nurofen') and high dose aspirin may sometimes be used with care in patients on dialysis if you no longer produce any wee (urine). Talk to your kidney doctor or pharmacist before taking these.



## Where can I find out more information?

- Patient View: [www.patientview.org](http://www.patientview.org)  
online access to your health records.  
Ask your renal unit for details about how to join
- Think kidneys website:  
[www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/ckd/information-for-the-public](http://www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk/ckd/information-for-the-public)



 [www.kidneycareuk.org](http://www.kidneycareuk.org)

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3 The Windmills,  
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 [kidneycareuk.org](https://www.facebook.com/kidneycareuk)

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 [www.renal.org](http://www.renal.org)

 0117 4148152

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C/O UK Renal Registry,  
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