Common Dialysis Medicines

This handouts lists common medicines you may take as a dialysis patient. Learn the names of your medicines and the reason why you are taking them.

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist before using over-the-counter medicines, herbals, supplements or vitamins. These products may be inappropriate to use in patients with kidney disease or interact with other medicines you are taking.

Phosphate Binders

These medicines bind phosphorus in the intestine. Take the medicine within 30 minutes of a meal, so it can bind with phosphorus foods and leave the body through the stool.

- Dialysis does a poor job of phosphorus removal. Taking phosphate binders is the only way to get rid of excess phosphorus from your body.
- Limit foods containing phosphorus to help keep your phosphorus within the target range. Talk to a dietitian for more information and read the handout, Phosphorus and Kidney Disease, for a list of foods high in phosphorus.
- High levels of phosphorus in the body can pull calcium of out your bones. This puts you at risk for bones that become weak and can fracture easily.
- High levels of phosphorus can also lead to skin itching or irritation. Talk with your doctor if you have these signs.
**Antihypertensives (Blood Pressure Control)**

These medicines keep your blood pressure controlled. Your doctor may also use medicines to reduce fluid retention, which can help to better control your blood pressure.

Some patients are instructed to not take their blood pressure medicines in the morning on the day they have dialysis. Your doctor will give you specific instructions about whether or not to take each blood pressure medicine on dialysis days.

**Vitamins and Supplements**

To keep your body in balance with dialysis treatment, your doctor may prescribe vitamins or supplements. Do not substitute your prescription for an over the counter product without talking to your doctor or pharmacist. Check with your doctor or pharmacist for how to take your vitamins and supplements.

You may be asked to take one or more of these:

- **B complex vitamin with folic acid:** Dialysis removes B vitamins and folic acid. Your doctor will prescribe a renal multivitamin tablet that contains these water soluble vitamins. B vitamins and folic acid are important because they play a role in making red blood cells.

- **Calcium supplement:** Calcium supplements prevent calcium loss in the bone. When calcium is taken between meals, it helps increase the calcium in your blood and bones. When calcium is taken with meals, it helps increase the calcium in your blood and bones and also decrease your phosphorus levels. Calcium may interact with other medicines that you take. Talk with your doctor or your pharmacist to be sure you are taking calcium at the right time.

- **Epoetin:** Healthy kidneys make a chemical called erythropoietin. If you are on dialysis, your erythropoietin levels may be low. This can lead to anemia. Epoetin may be prescribed to you to treat your anemia. It can be given as an injection or during dialysis treatment.

- **Iron supplement:** Iron helps the body make red blood cells or hemoglobin. Red blood cells are needed to carry oxygen to your organs. Too little iron can lead to a condition called anemia. Iron may be given in a pill form or as an infusion during your dialysis treatment. Iron can interact with medicines that you take. Talk with your doctor or your pharmacist to be sure you are taking iron at the right time.
Stool Softeners

It is important to stay regular and avoid constipation. Be sure you take stool softeners as ordered and tell the dialysis staff if the medicine is not working. If you are on peritoneal dialysis, you may have problems with your exchanges if constipation occurs.

- Do not use products containing phosphorus, mineral oil, aluminum or magnesium.
- Eat high fiber foods as recommended by your dietitian. See the handout, High Fiber Diet, for a list of foods high in fiber.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.