

# MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS FOR KIDNEY HEALTH





## Managing your medications for kidney health

### HELPFUL HINT

Become an expert on all the medications you're taking. You should know:

Name of medication

Strength of medication

Dose (how much to take)

How often and what time of day to take it

What the medication is used for

What common side effects to watch out for

What to do if you miss a dose

Different types of medications are commonly prescribed for chronic kidney disease. Some medications slow down the progression of kidney disease or manage the complications of kidney disease. Others reduce the risk of heart disease or stroke. It is very important to take your medications as prescribed and the information in this chapter focuses on helping you to do that.

Medications often have more than one name: the medical or generic name of the drug, and the brand or trade name used by the pharmaceutical company to identify their version of the medication. Towards the end of this handbook, there is a chart showing examples of common brand names for various medications.

## Commonly used medications

### Blood pressure medications

Blood pressure medications help to reduce your blood pressure. This reduces your risk of stroke and heart attack and plays a very important role in slowing down the decline of your kidney function.

Different types of blood pressure medications work in different ways so you may be prescribed two or more different types in order to reach your blood pressure goal. Some of the more commonly used blood pressure medications include **angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors** or **angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB)**, **beta-blockers**, **calcium-channel blockers**, and **alpha-blockers**.

### Diuretics

Diuretics (also called "water pills") are medications that help your kidneys get rid of extra sodium and water.

### Cholesterol medications

Cholesterol medications reduce the cholesterol levels in your blood. Controlling your cholesterol reduces your risk of heart disease and stroke. This is important because people with chronic kidney disease are at higher risk of heart disease and stroke. There are different types of cholesterol lowering medications including **statins**, **fibrates**, and **ezetimibe**.





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appointments. It is very important that you take your medication list with you to the emergency room if you need to go. Make sure to make any changes to the list as new medications are added, stopped or if the dosage changes. This will help your healthcare team know what you are taking and help prevent possible medication interactions or duplications and improve overall medication safety.

## Let your pharmacist know that you have chronic kidney disease

As part of the healthcare team, your pharmacist can work with your doctors to make sure that you are taking the right dose for your level of kidney function.

## When to contact your pharmacist or doctor

- If you have a serious reaction to a medication
- If you are ill (vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration)
- If you have new and/or irritating side effects
- If you think your medication is not working
- If you run out of medications - try to think ahead and refill your medications two weeks before they will run out
- If you are prescribed a new medication by someone who is not part of your regular healthcare team (i.e. emergency room physician) who may not be familiar with your level of kidney function

## Do not stop taking your medication(s) without first talking to your doctor

Talk to your doctor first before stopping your medication(s) so that they can make sure it won't affect your treatment plan or your health. If you are having financial difficulty buying the medications you need, or if you do stop or change your medication dose for any reason, be sure to let your doctor know so that together you can plan appropriately for your care.

### NOTE:

For sample medication logs, information for your pharmacist and more tips on managing your medications, go to **Chapter Seven: Developing a personal care plan of action.**



### NOTES:

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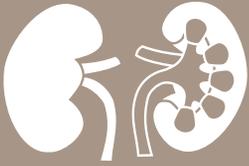
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Some herbal medications also include diuretics, high levels of potassium, and/or other ingredients that can affect the kidneys or interact with your prescription medications to change their effectiveness. It is very important to tell your doctor about any herbal medications or products you may already be using or plan to use.



## Vaccinations

It is recommended that all people with advanced CKD have an annual flu shot unless your doctor advises otherwise.

It is also recommended that all people with CKD have the pneumococcal vaccine - this is to prevent severe forms of pneumonia. Usually this is given once and then repeated in five years.

You may also need to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B - a virus that can cause liver damage. You should check with your healthcare team about these vaccinations.



## Summary

- Your medications can help you to slow down the decline of your kidney function, manage the complications of CKD and/or manage other medical conditions.
- It is very important to take your medications as prescribed.
- You should know as much as you can about all the medications you are taking and bring an up-to-date list with you to all healthcare appointments.
- Do not stop taking medications without first talking with your doctor.
- There are some medications that you should avoid such as ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), herbal and complementary medicines.