

# Common Medications Taken During Hemodialysis

## For patients on hemodialysis

Read this pamphlet to learn more about some common medications you may be taking during hemodialysis and how they work.

Medication	What it is for
<b>Red Blood Cell Stimulating Agents</b>	<p>The kidneys help to make red blood cells in the body.</p> <p>When you are on dialysis, it means your kidneys are not working well enough to make red blood cells. The medications that help make red blood cells are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darbepoetin (Aranesp®) Given once a week during hemodialysis</li> <li>• Erythropoietin (Eprex®) Given 3 times a week during hemodialysis.</li> </ul> <p>Not all patients on hemodialysis receive this medication. You might make enough red blood cells and not need it.</p>



Medication	What it is for
<p><b>Iron</b></p>	<p>Many patients coming to dialysis have low iron. The doctor often prescribes iron sucrose (Venofer®) to patients who are starting dialysis. It replaces the iron in the body and helps to make red blood cells.</p> <p>It is given during each treatment through the dialysis machine into your bloodstream for the first 4 weeks, then 1 or 2 times a month after that.</p>
<p><b>Blood Pressure Medications</b></p>	<p><b>High blood pressure</b></p> <p>Fluids can build up between dialysis sessions causing high blood pressure. If blood pressure stays high for a long time, you have a higher chance of developing heart disease, or having a heart attack or stroke.</p> <p>There are many different medications that can help to control blood pressure. Your nephrologist will find the right medications that work for you.</p> <p>Some non-prescription cold or allergy medications have ingredients that can raise blood pressure. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take medications for your cough or cold.</p> <p><b>Low blood pressure</b></p> <p>Some patients have low blood pressure during dialysis. Your doctor may ask you not to take these medications before coming to dialysis. We will check your blood pressure during each dialysis session to make sure your blood pressure is under control.</p>

<b>Medication</b>	<b>What it is for</b>
<b>Phosphate Binders</b>	<p>One of the biggest problems facing dialysis patients is the build-up of phosphate in the blood. You can control this problem by eating a low phosphate diet. A dietitian can help you choose healthy low phosphate foods, such as fruits, white bread and nondairy products.</p> <p>Medications called phosphate binders also help with the build-up of phosphate in the blood. They bind dietary phosphate in the gut and prevent it from being absorbed.</p> <p>The most common medication is calcium carbonate. It must be taken at the beginning of each meal. If your calcium levels also become too high, or if calcium carbonate does not work well, your doctor can also prescribe lanthanum carbonate (Fosrenol®) or sevelamer (Renagel®) or sucroferric oxyhydroxide (Velphoro®).</p>
<b>Vitamins B and C (Replavite®)</b>	<p>Some vitamins such as vitamin B and C are lost during dialysis. The multivitamin called Replavite® provides these vitamins. Take Replavite® after dialysis for best results.</p>
<b>Calcitriol (Rocaltrol®)</b>	<p>The kidneys convert Vitamin D to its active form that helps the body absorb and use calcium. Because the kidneys are not working as well, many patients on hemodialysis do not have enough of the active form of Vitamin D.</p> <p>Calcitriol (Rocaltrol®) is the active form of vitamin D. Your doctor may prescribe calcitriol to increase calcium levels in the blood, which keeps bones healthy. Calcitriol may also be prescribed to help lower blood levels of parathyroid hormone, which is often increased when someone is on hemodialysis.</p>

Medication	What it is for
<p><b>Cinacalcet (Sensipar®)</b></p>	<p>Some patients on hemodialysis have increased parathyroid hormone levels. If your hormone levels are high for a long time, this can lead to bone disease.</p> <p>First we use calcitriol to lower the hormone. If calcitriol does not lower your parathyroid hormone levels, then your doctor may prescribe a medication called cinacalcet (Sensipar®).</p>
<p><b>Antibiotics</b></p>	<p>Antibiotics are medicines used to treat or prevent an infection. For patients on hemodialysis, antibiotics can build up because the kidney is not able to fully remove them from the body. Tell your doctor and pharmacist that you are on dialysis when being prescribed antibiotics. Also, please let the dialysis staff know when you start taking antibiotics that other doctors have prescribed.</p>



**Have feedback about this document?**

Please fill out our survey. Use this link: [surveymonkey.com/r/uhn-pe](https://surveymonkey.com/r/uhn-pe)

Visit [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca) for more health information. Contact [pfep@uhn.ca](mailto:pfep@uhn.ca) to request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats.

© 2022 University Health Network. All rights reserved. Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.