

Medicines for chronic kidney disease

Patient information: medicines



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What is this leaflet about?

Medicines can be used to help the symptoms of chronic kidney disease (CKD). This leaflet aims to give you more information about the most common medicines for CKD and some of their possible side effects.

For more information ask your doctor or pharmacist.



What types of medicines might I need?

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

Medicines that thin your blood

These include aspirin or clopidogrel. These are usually taken once a day in the morning with breakfast. Side effects include indigestion and bruising.

Note: low dose aspirin (75mg once a day) is safe in kidney failure.

Medicines that reduce cholesterol in your blood

These include a type of medicine called statins, such as atorvastatin, simvastatin, pravastatin or rosuvastatin. These are usually taken once a day in the evening. **Note:** statins can cause muscle pain so tell your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you have any unexplained muscle aches and pains.

Other medicines that can be used to reduce cholesterol include ezetimibe and bezafibrate.



Medicines that reduce acid in your stomach (antacids)

These medicines prevent indigestion or problems with stomach ulcers. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs, including omeprazole, lansoprazole) are usually taken once a day. Side effects include diarrhoea and, in rare cases, they can worsen kidney problems. Your doctor will monitor your routine blood tests and change your medication in the rare event it causes a problem.

H2-antagonists (nizatidine, cimetidine) are usually taken once or twice a day. Side effects include tiredness and headaches.

Medicines to stop your blood becoming too acidic

Sodium bicarbonate is used to prevent your blood becoming too acidic. The dose depends on the acid level and is adjusted to keep the level right, but is usually two or three times a day. Side effects include stomach cramps, belching and flatulence.

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. Fybogel® should not be taken if you are on a fluid restriction.

Medicines that reduce itching

Itching is a common symptom of CKD which can happen as waste products build up in your body. Antihistamines are often suggested to help; there are many types available and some can be bought from your pharmacist. Make sure you don't take more than the recommended dose. However, the mechanism of itching associated with kidney disease is different from allergic itching, so antihistamines are usually not effective. Gabapentin, pregabalin and difelikefalin are drugs that your doctor might consider prescribing for CKD-related itch. **Note: many of these medications may make you drowsy.**

Medicines to help with restless legs

Some kidney patients find that they get restless feelings in their legs. Pramipexole, ropinirole, gabapentin and clonazepam can be used to help with this. Pramipexole and ropinirole can cause impulsive behaviours such as excessive gambling or eating, so if this occurs, please tell your doctor. **All of these medicines may make you drowsy.**



Medicines to treat gout

People with CKD may suffer from gout. Dialysis can help with this. Allopurinol and febuxostat are medicines that can be used to prevent gout. Patients with CKD only need a low dose. If your gout comes back, please see your doctor. Neither of these medications can be taken at the same time as a medicine called azathioprine. If you are on azathioprine, and have gout, it is important to talk to your doctor about an alternative treatment.

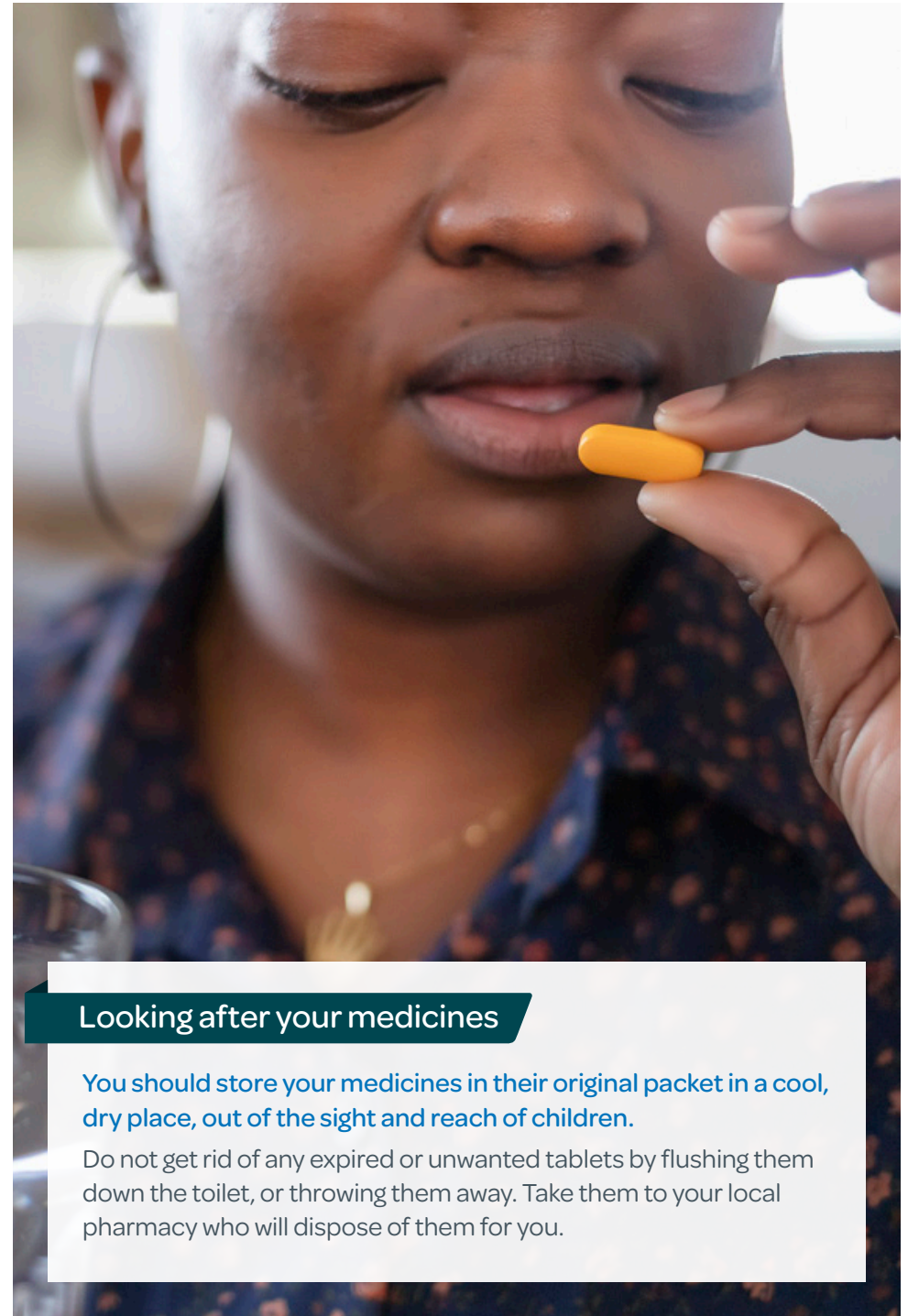
Hepatitis B vaccination

You are advised to have hepatitis B vaccinations before you start needing dialysis. This is a viral infection spread through infected blood or bodily fluids, so having dialysis can make you vulnerable to catching the infection.

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 medicines, such as ibuprofen (Nurofen®) and high-dose aspirin, should not be used by CKD patients or those with a kidney transplant, but can be used, with care, by patients on dialysis. Talk to your kidney doctor or pharmacist before taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).



Looking after your medicines

You should store your medicines in their original packet in a cool, dry place, out of the sight and reach of children.

Do not get rid of any expired or unwanted tablets by flushing them down the toilet, or throwing them away. Take them to your local pharmacy who will dispose of them for you.



Where can I find more information?

- Read about the medication used to treat kidney disease and kidney failure: www.kidneycareuk.org/medication
- NHS Medicines A to Z: www.nhs.uk/medicines

Contact us



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