Baxter

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR MEDICATIONS

## What you will learn:

- Why your medications are important
- Medications your kidney doctor may prescribe, and what they do
- Medications that may be added to your dialysis solution

PD Education

BOOKLET 8

While on PD, you may need to take medications in addition to doing your PD treatments. These medications treat problems related to kidney disease or your unique health needs. This booklet will teach you about some of the most common medications you may be prescribed, information for taking them, and tips for keeping track of your medications.

# Medications and You

Taking your medications as prescribed by your doctor is an important part of your PD treatment. Your kidney doctor will determine the medications you should take and the dosage of each. This will be based on your medical condition, blood test results, and how you are feeling.

Remember the following:

- Always follow the directions that you receive from your kidney doctor or PD nurse.
- If a doctor other than your kidney doctor prescribes you a new medication, call your PD nurse before taking the medication.
- Always talk to your kidney doctor or PD nurse before you take any medications not prescribed/ordered by your kidney doctor, including over-the-counter medications like laxatives, vitamins, or herbal supplements.
- Always keep an updated list of anything related to your health:
  - Medications with dosage and frequency
  - Medical history
  - Surgeries
  - Allergies
  - Physician phone numbers
  - Pharmacy phone number
  - PD Nurse/Dialysis Unit phone number
  - PD treatment schedule, including what types of solutions you use

  Carry a copy of this list in your wallet at all times.

# Common Medications Your Kidney Doctor May Prescribe

It is common for patients to be prescribed additional medications with PD therapy. The next few pages will go through some of the medications that you may be prescribed. Refer to this information if you ever need a reminder of why you are taking certain medications.

## Erythropoietin (erith-ro-po-etin) stimulating agent

Erythropoietin is a hormone that stimulates the bone marrow to help you make new red blood cells. When your kidneys fail, they may no longer make enough erythropoietin, lowering the number of red blood cells in your body. When you lack red blood cells, you can develop anemia, which makes you feel tired and weak.

If you're prescribed an erythropoietin-stimulating agent, either your nurse will give you the injection or you will be trained to give it to yourself at home. The dose may change based on the results of your monthly bloodwork, so it's important to keep your clinic appointments. Be sure to ask your doctor or PD nurse if you have any questions about any medication instructions you receive.

## Iron

Iron is a mineral that works in your body to help make red blood cells. You may be prescribed iron if your doctor notices a low number of red blood cells and/or low iron levels in your lab results.

Iron can be given intravenously by your healthcare team or your doctor may prescribe iron pills. In order to get the full benefit from your iron pills, you should take it exactly as your doctor prescribes.

Here are some helpful tips for taking your iron pills:

- Do not take iron pills with phosphate binders, antacids, or milk
- Iron pills work best when you take them on an empty stomach
- If you get an upset stomach, ask your kidney doctor or PD nurse for suggestions on how to relieve your symptoms

## Insulin

Insulin is a medication used to help maintain blood sugar levels. Diabetic patients sometimes need insulin to help control blood sugar levels.

If you have diabetes, your kidney doctor may prescribe insulin. Your kidney doctor or PD nurse will tell you how to take your insulin if you need it.

## Stool softeners

Stool softeners are medications that help you to have easier bowel movements. Constipation can interfere with a PD treatment, and can also cause your PD catheter to work poorly.

If you feel constipated, contact your PD nurse. Your PD nurse can help plan a bowel regimen for you to follow that may include a stool softener prescribed by your kidney doctor and dietary recommendations from your dietitian.

## Blood pressure medications

Blood pressure (BP) medications are medications that help control your blood pressure. It is important to monitor and record your blood pressure readings on your daily flow sheet. Learn what BP readings you need to report to your PD nurse.

If you need BP medications, your doctor will order the right type and amount for you. It's important to follow the schedule for taking BP medications in order to control your blood pressure.

## Phosphate binders

Phosphate binders are medications that help maintain normal phosphorus levels in your body. These medications prevent the absorption of the phosphorus from your food into your body.

There are several types of phosphate binders. Your kidney doctor will prescribe the one that's best for you, if you need it. Take your phosphate binder according to your doctor's instructions.

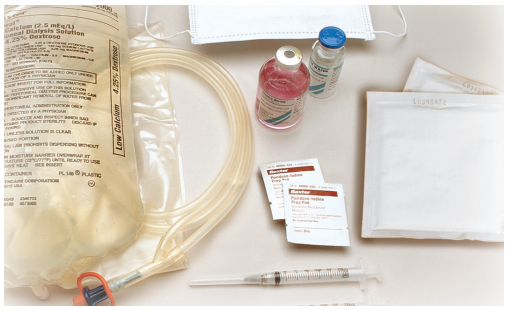
## Vitamin D

Vitamin D works with calcium in your body to keep your bones strong. When your kidneys fail, the active form of Vitamin D in your blood is decreased. This active form of Vitamin D is different from the Vitamin D in a multivitamin or the Vitamin D you see listed on a milk carton.

You might need to take active Vitamin D. Your kidney doctor will prescribe the right amount and type.

# Adding Medications to Your Dialysis Solution

Your PD nurse will give you information and may train you to add medications to your dialysis solution. You should refer to those instructions and the package inserts for specific information.



Medications that may be added to dialysis solution include:

## Heparin

Heparin is a medication that may help prevent blockage of your catheter when fibrin is present. You may notice fibrin in your PD drain bag as a white, thread-like material.

Rx Not all patients need heparin, but be sure to tell your PD nurse if you notice fibrin. Your kidney doctor or PD nurse will tell you how to administer heparin if you need it.

## Antibiotics

Antibiotics are medications that fight infections. You'll need antibiotics if you develop an infection, such as peritonitis, or an exit-site infection.

Rx Your kidney doctor will order the antibiotic that is best for your type of infection. **Always** take your antibiotics exactly as prescribed, whether they are to be added to a PD solution bag or taken by mouth (orally). Be sure to finish all doses of the antibiotic.

For the medications listed herein, refer to the manufacturer's full Prescribing Information.

# New Words

**Active vitamin D**
A medication that works with calcium to keep your bones strong.

**Antibiotics**
Medications that fight infections.

**Blood pressure (BP) medications**
Medications that help control blood pressure.

**Erythropoietin**
A hormone that stimulates the bone marrow to make new red blood cells.

**Heparin**
A medication that may help prevent blockage of your catheter when fibrin is present.

**Insulin**
A medication used to control blood sugar levels.

**Iron**
A supplement that works in your body to help make red blood cells.

**Phosphate binders**
Medications that help maintain normal phosphorus levels in your body by binding with the phosphorus in your gut and preventing absorption.

**Stool softeners**
Medications that help promote a soft, easier bowel movement.

# Notes

PD Training: Patient Training Self-Test

# Understanding Your Medications

**1.** Check with your doctor or PD nurse before taking any non-prescribed or over-the-counter medications.

True False

**2.** It is important to keep a list of all your medications, dosages, and any drug allergies with you at all times.

True False

**3.** Which of the following is true about iron?

a. Iron pills work best when taken on an empty stomach
b. Iron should not be taken with phosphate binders, antacids, or milk
c. If you get an upset stomach, check with your doctor or PD nurse for suggestions to relieve your symptoms
d. All of the above

**4.** Stool softeners help promote softer, easier bowel movements.

True False

**5.** Blood pressure medication works best when taken on the schedule your doctor has prescribed.

True False

**6.** To be most effective, phosphate binders should be taken at the same time as your meals or snacks.

True False

**7.** Vitamin D works with calcium in your body to keep your bones strong and healthy.

True False

**8.** Which of the following medications may be ordered by your physician to be added to your dialysis solution?

a. Insulin
b. Antibiotics
c. Heparin
d. All of the above

**9.** Which of the following is true about heparin?

a. Heparin may be used to maintain catheter flow when fibrin is present
b. Heparin helps your body make more red blood cells
c. Heparin helps maintain your blood sugar level

**10.** If your doctor has ordered antibiotics, you may stop taking them once you feel better.

True False

**Patient Signature:**

_____

**Date:** _____

**Answers:** 1–True, 2–True, 3–d, 4–True, 5–True, 6–True, 7–True, 8–d, 9–a, 10–False

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PD Training: Patient Checklist

# Understanding Your Medications

Patient Name: _____

Person Trained: _____

Relationship to Patient: _____

Completed by (Signature): _____ Date: _____

## Patient Training/Retraining Checklist Instructions

- The Patient Training Checklist should be used to help track the patient's progress while being trained, to refresh the learning of a current patient/caregiver or to retrain a returning patient.
- Place the date in the appropriate box as the patient verbalizes understanding of a topic or successfully completes a return demonstration of a procedure.
- If the topic is not applicable (N/A) to the patient, place the date in the N/A column.
- Use Notes section as needed to indicate future training needs.

| Patient demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of: | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Medications and you** | | | |
| • Medications are an important part of your treatment, determined by your kidney doctor | | | |
| • Always follow the medication instructions from your kidney doctor or PD nurse | | | |
| • Don't take any medications that were not prescribed/ordered by your kidney doctor, including laxatives, vitamins or herbal supplements | | | |
| • If you get a new medication from a doctor other than your kidney doctor, call your PD nurse before taking it | | | |
| • Keep a list of all medications, dosages and drug allergies with you at all times. Include PD solutions on the list of your medications | | | |

| Patient demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of: | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Common medications and why they are important** | | | |
| **Erythropoietin – to help make more red blood cells** | | | |
| • When kidneys fail, they no longer make enough of this hormone | | | |
| • Too few red blood cells cause anemia | | | |
| • Your PD nurse may give you an erythropoietin injection. Or, you may be trained to give it to yourself at home | | | |
| **Iron – to help make red blood cells** | | | |
| • Iron pills or iron infusions may be needed to increase amount of iron in your blood | | | |
| • Iron must be taken exactly as your doctor prescribed | | | |
| – Don't take with phosphate binders, antacids, or milk | | | |
| – Iron pills work best when taken on empty stomach | | | |
| – If you get an upset stomach, check with doctor or PD nurse | | | |
| **Stool softeners – to promote easier bowel movements** | | | |
| • Constipation can interfere with PD treatment and cause your PD catheter to work poorly | | | |
| • Contact PD nurse if you become constipated | | | |
| **Blood pressure medications – to control blood pressure** | | | |
| • Your doctor will prescribe the type and amount you need | | | |
| • Follow your schedule for taking your blood pressure medication | | | |
| **Phosphate binders – to remove phosphorus from the body and keep bones healthy** | | | |
| • When kidneys don't work, they can't remove phosphorus | | | |
| • Many types exist; your doctor will prescribe best one for you | | | |
| • Must be taken with meals or snacks to be effective | | | |

| Patient demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of: | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Vitamin D – to keep bones strong and healthy; works with calcium** | | | |
| • When kidneys fail, active form of vitamin D in body decreases | | | |
| **Adding medications to dialysis solution** | | | |
| • Your PD nurse will give you information and training on this, if needed | | | |
| – Heparin | | | |
| – Antibiotics | | | |
| | | | |
| **Heparin – to help maintain catheter flow when fibrin is present** | | | |
| • Fibrin is white material that can be present in drained PD solution. It is often present in patients with peritonitis | | | |
| • Call your PD nurse if you notice fibrin in your drained PD solution | | | |
| • Not all patients need heparin | | | |
| **Antibiotics – to treat an infection** | | | |
| • Your doctor will prescribe the best antibiotic for you | | | |
| • Take the antibiotic as prescribed and until all doses are taken | | | |
| • If an antibiotic is added to solution bag, add it for the designated number of days | | | |
| **Insulin – to help maintain blood sugar levels (for some diabetics)** | | | |
| • Your PD nurse will instruct you how to take insulin | | | |

| Final checks | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lesson reviewed | | | |
| New words reviewed | | | |
| Self-test completed | | | |

**Patient Signature: _____ Date: _____**

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# Notes

## Additional Resources on PD

www.livenow.info

www.kidney.ca

www.kidneycampus.ca

www.ontariorenalnetwork.ca

www.bcrenalagency.ca

www.renal.org

www.kidney.org

www.agir.ca

www.kidneyhealth.ca/wp

www.nshealth.ca/renal-program

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