



# Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program  
414 D'Onofrio Drive, Ste. 200  
Madison, WI 53719  
[www.lifeoptions.org](http://www.lifeoptions.org)

## Q: How do my medications help my condition?

**A:** People with kidney failure may take eight or more drugs every day. To stay healthy, take your drugs just as your doctor tells you. Here are some common drugs for kidney failure and what they do:

- **Antibiotics** fight infections. Your doctor may order one before you have dental work.
- **Anemia drugs** (Aranesp®, EPOGEN®) work with iron to help your body make red blood cells. Without enough red blood cells, you will feel tired, weak, and short of breath.
- **Blood pressure pills** lower your blood pressure, keep your blood vessels healthy, and help prevent a stroke or heart attack.
- **Diuretics** (water pills) help get rid of extra salt and water, control blood pressure, and keep your heart from having to pump too hard. You only need these pills if you still make some urine.
- **Heart medications** help protect your heart and keep it beating right.
- **Iron** by mouth or IV helps your body form healthy red blood cells. Iron does not work as well if you take it with food or other drugs.
- **Lipid lowering drugs** lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of a stroke or heart attack.
- **Phosphate binders** remove extra phosphorus from your food to help keep your bones healthy. They work best if you take them with food.
- **Stool softeners** make bowel movements easier when you have a fluid limit.
- **Vitamins** help your body stay strong and healthy. You get fewer vitamins than you need on an in-center hemodialysis diet. Your vitamin needs change with kidney failure. Kidney vitamins have B6, B12, biotin, C, folacin, niacin, pantothenic acid, riboflavin, and thiamin, and less A, D, E, and K than other vitamins.

### What I can do to stay healthy:

- Take my drugs at the right time of day, in the right doses.
- Ask my doctor or pharmacist if I don't know what my drugs are for.
- Write a list of all my drugs and what they are for.
- Make a chart of when I should take each pill, so I can keep track.
- Bring in my pills for review when my center asks me to.
- Tell my doctor if I have any side effects from my drugs.

## Q: How do my medications help my condition?

- Keep taking my drugs unless my doctor tells me it's okay to stop.
- Tell my care team about any non-prescription drugs or herbs I take.
- Tell my doctor or social worker if I can't afford my drugs, so they can help me find a way to get them.
- Put all my pills for the week in a weekly pill box so that I can see what I need to take and see if I have forgotten to take my pills.
- Visit module 4 of Kidney School™: *Following Your Treatment Plan* at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org) to learn more about medications.