



# Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program

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[www.lifeoptions.org](http://www.lifeoptions.org)

## Q: What is EPO and how does it help my anemia?

**A:** EPO is *erythropoietin*, a hormone made by healthy kidneys. EPO tells your bone marrow to make new red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all the cells in your body.

When your kidneys fail, they may not make enough EPO, so you may not have enough red blood cells. This is called *anemia*. If you have anemia, your skin, gums, and nail beds may look pale. Anemia can make you feel:

- Tired
- Weak
- Confused
- Short of breath
- Cold all the time

Treating anemia can help keep your heart healthy.

When you have anemia, your doctor will prescribe a man-made form of EPO called Aranesp® or EPOGEN®. This drug works like your own EPO and tells your bone marrow to make more red blood cells.

### What I can do to deal with anemia:

- Tell my doctor if I feel tired, cold, or short of breath even when I haven't done much.
- Know my EPO dose so I can check if I am getting the right amount.
- Take any iron my doctor prescribes, to help my EPO work better.
- Ask my doctor about exercise to help build up my strength.
- Visit module 6 of Kidney School™: *Anemia and Kidney Disease* at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org) to learn more.