



Patient & Family Guide
2026

Over-the-Counter Medications and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

同时提供简体中文版

Also available in Simplified Chinese:
CH85-2527

Aussi disponible en français :
FF85-2598



www.nshealth.ca

Over-the-Counter Medications and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Cost guide

\$: Less than \$10

\$\$: \$11 to \$20

\$\$\$: \$21 to \$30

Cough or cold

Best choices:

Oxymetazoline or xylometazoline sprays
(Claritin®, Otrivin®, Dristan®)

- **Do not use for more than 5 days.**
- Cost: \$

Guaifenesin (Benylin® Mucus & Phlegm,
Buckley's® Mucus & Phlegm)

- If you have diabetes, use sugar-free syrups (check the label).
- Cost: \$

Lozenges

- If you have diabetes, use a sugar-free type.
- Cost: \$

Dextromethorphan (Robitussin® Cough + Chest Congestion DM)

- Cost: \$

Do not take:

Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®)

Phenylephrine (NeoCitran, Dimetapp®)

- These medications can raise your blood pressure.

Cough and cold medications may have multiple ingredients. Some may not be safe for you. Check the ingredient list first. Ask your pharmacist if you are not sure.

Fever or pain

Best choice:

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)

- **Do not take more than 4000 mg in 24 hours (1 day).**
- If you have liver disease, **do not** take this medication unless your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) says it is OK and tells you how much to take.
- Cost: \$ to \$\$

Do not take:

Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)

Naproxen (Aleve®)

Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) at doses (amounts) higher than 81 mg (Aspirin®, Anacin®)

- These medications can:
 - › Raise your risk of bleeding
 - › Raise your blood pressure
 - › Hurt your kidneys

Codeine (Tylenol® No. 1)

- This medication can build up in your body over time and cause harmful side effects, like:
 - › Constipation (not being able to poop)
 - › Trouble breathing
 - › Drowsiness (feeling tired)
 - › Confusion

Allergies

Best choices:

(Doses are lower for kidney disease)

Loratadine (Claritin®)

- Take 10 mg every second day.
- Cost: \$\$

Desloratadine (Aerius®)

- Take 5 mg every second day.
- Cost: \$\$\$

Cetirizine (Reactine®)

- Take 5 mg once a day. If you are on dialysis, take 5 mg every second day.
- Cost: \$\$

Do not take:

Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®)

- This medication can cause drowsiness.

Upset stomach (indigestion, burning pain) or heartburn

Best choices:

(Doses are lower for kidney disease)

Ranitidine (Zantac®)

- Take 75 mg (half a tablet) to 150 mg a day (after dialysis on dialysis days).
- Cost: \$\$

Calcium carbonate (Tums® Antacid)

- You may also need this for phosphate binding.
- If you are on dialysis, **do not** take this medication. It may cause calcium to build up in your blood.
- Cost: \$

Famotidine

- Take 20 mg a day.
- Cost: \$\$

Do not take:

Aluminum or magnesium (Maalox®, Gaviscon®, Roloids®, Diovol®)

- These medications can build up in your body over time and cause side effects.

Sodium (Alka-Seltzer®)

- This medication can build up in your body over time and raise your blood pressure.

Nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)

Best choice:

(Doses are lower for kidney disease)

Dimenhydrinate (Gravol™)

- Cost: \$

Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)

Best choice:

Loperamide (Imodium®)

- Cost: \$\$

Do not take:

Attapulgate (Kaopectate®)

- This medication can cause the minerals in your body to be out of balance.

Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol®)

- This medication may cause you to bleed easier.

Constipation

Best choices:

Polyethylene Glycol 3350 (Lax-A Day®)

- Cost: \$\$

Sennosides (Senokot®)

- Cost: \$

Bisacodyl (DulcoLax®)

- Cost: \$

Lactulose

- Cost: \$\$

Do not take:

Magnesium (Phillips'® Milk of Magnesia, Magnolax®)

Phosphate (Fleet® Phospho-soda®)

- These medications can build up in your body over time and cause side effects.

Multivitamins

Best choice:

Renal vitamin (Replavite™)

- Cost: \$

Do not take:

Adult multivitamin

- This medication can cause certain vitamins to build up in your body, and may cause side effects.

Creams and ointments

Best choices:

Menthol, camphor, capsaicin (La’Kota™, Tiger Balm®)

- Cost: \$

Hydrocortisone 0.5%

- Cost: \$

Emollients with urea, petrolatum, or glycerin (Glaxal® Base, Uremol®)

- Cost: \$ to \$\$

Petroleum jelly (Vaseline®)

- Cost: \$

Do not take:

Diclofenac (Voltaren)

Salicylate (Bengay®, Myoflex®, Flexall™, Rub-A535™)

- In large doses, these medications can:
 - › Raise your risk of bleeding
 - › Raise your blood pressure
 - › Hurt your kidneys

Herbal products

Do not take:

Any herbal or natural health products

- These medications can build up in your body and cause harmful side effects.
- If you would like to use nutritional supplements (like Ensure[®], Boost[®], protein powder, electrolytes), talk with your renal team about whether they are right for you.
- **Do not** take any of the medications in the “Do not take” sections, **unless a health care provider on your nephrology team tells you it is OK.**
- Tell your health care provider if:
 - › You are vomiting
 - › You have diarrhea
 - › You cannot eat or drink as usual
- Always tell your nephrologist (kidney doctor) or your pharmacist before taking or stopping any medication.
- **Tell your pharmacist that you are on dialysis.** This will help them to make sure your medications are safe and that you are taking the right doses.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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