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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](http://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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To be reviewed March 2026 or sooner, if needed.  
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>

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

### **Do not use**

- 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.

- **Do not** take any of the medications in the “Do not take” sections, **unless a health care provider on your nephrology team told you it is OK.**
- If you are vomiting, have diarrhea, or cannot drink or eat like you usually do, tell your health care provider.
- Always tell your nephrologist 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 dose.

## 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 unwanted 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: \$

# 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® Cough 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 \$\$

### 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.

## **Nausea (feeling sick to your 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**

- Attapulgite (Kaopectate® Bismuth Subsalicylate)

These medications can cause the minerals in your body to be out of balance.

- Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol®)

This medication may cause you to bleed easier.

### **Do not take**

- Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)
- Naproxen (Aleve®)
- Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) at doses higher than 81 mg (Aspirin®, Anacin®)

These medications can:

- › cause a higher 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, or every second day if you are on dialysis.
  - › Cost: \$\$

### Do not take

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®)

It can cause drowsiness.

## Upset stomach (indigestion, burning pain) or heartburn

### Best choices

(Doses are lower for kidney disease)

- Ranitidine (Zantac®)
  - › Take 75 mg a day (after dialysis on dialysis days).
  - › Cost: \$\$
- Calcium carbonate (Tums® Antacid)
  - › You may also need this for phosphate binding.
  - › 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 blood pressure.