

Pruritis (Itchy Skin) and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

Notes:

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 this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

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

Prepared by: Renal Pharmacy Team, Renal Program
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

- Wash your clothes and bed sheets with mild laundry detergent made for sensitive skin (like Tide® Simply Free and Gentle). Do 2 rinse cycles to make sure all the soap is rinsed off.

How will my kidney team treat my pruritus?

- If you have tried the suggestions above and they have not helped, talk to your kidney team about other options. They may suggest a prescription medication, like:
 - › Medicated cream
 - › Oral (taken by mouth) medication
 - › An injectable (given using a needle and a syringe) medication at the end of each dialysis treatment

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

- Apply moisturizing cream within 2 minutes of getting out of the bath or shower.

- Apply cream (**not lotion**) to itchy areas up to 3 or 4 times a day. Examples of creams include:

- › Aveeno®
- › CeraVe®
- › Cetaphil®
- › Complex 15®
- › Dormer® 211
- › Glaxal* Base Moisturizing Cream
- › La Roche-Posay Laboratoire Dermatologique Lipikar Baume AP+M

- You may also need ointment. Examples of ointments include:

- › Vaseline®
- › Aquaphor®

- You can buy these creams and ointments at most drugstores.

- Use a humidifier to add moisture to the air in your home. This is very important in the winter.

- Keep your skin cool at night by using cotton bed sheets, or a fan.

- **Do not** wear clothing made from rough or scratchy fabrics (like wool or polyester).

Pruritis (Itchy Skin) and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

What is pruritus?

- Pruritis is an itchy feeling on or under your skin.

- It is also called chronic kidney disease-associated pruritis (CKD-aP).

- Pruritis may cause your skin to:

- › Be dry or crack
- › Have bumps, spots, or blisters
- › Look the same as usual

- Pruritis may happen on your:

- › Head
- › Arms
- › Chest
- › Legs
- › Belly
- › Back
- › Whole body

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

What causes pruritus?

- We do not fully understand why people with CKD get pruritis. It may be caused by:
 - › Dry skin
 - › Allergies
 - › Your CKD
 - › Not getting enough dialysis (if you are getting dialysis)
- **It is important to work with your kidney team to manage your pruritus. Do not try to treat pruritus on your own using other medications.**

Does scratching help pruritus?

- Scratching may not help. The itchy feeling may come and go, or it may always be there, even if you scratch.
- Scratching can irritate (bother) your skin. This can:
 - › make the itching worse.
 - › change your skin colour or texture.
- Scratching your skin a lot, or any time it is itchy, can damage your skin and cause infection.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms may be different for each person. Common symptoms are:
 - › An itchy or prickling feeling, feeling like something is crawling under your skin
 - › Feeling like you want to scratch your skin where the itchy feeling is, described by many people as “an itch you just cannot get to”
 - › Itching at night, which can lead to poor sleep
 - › Itching that gets worse in warmer weather, or when you are feeling stressed

How can I prevent pruritus?

- Keep your fingernails short and clean.
- **Do not** scratch or rub your skin. It can make the itching worse.
- Apply clean, cold compresses to the itchy areas.
- Take baths or showers with lukewarm (**not hot**) water.
- Use a fragrance-free, sensitive skin bar soap (like Dove Sensitive Skin Beauty Bar).
- Use as little soap as possible. Only use soap to wash sweaty areas (like your armpits and groin).