



Patient & Family Guide

2023

# Using Medications Safely When You Have Kidney Disease



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Using Medications Safely When You Have Kidney Disease

## Why is medication safety important for people with kidney disease?

- People with kidney disease often take many medications.
- These medications can help with your kidney disease and other medical conditions (like high blood pressure [hypertension] or diabetes).
- **It is important to take your medications regularly and as told by your health care provider.**
- Your kidneys work to remove many medications from your body. If you have kidney disease, some medications are not removed and may build up in the body. This can be harmful.

## What do I need to know about my medications?

- It is important to know:
  - › Which medications you are taking and how to take them.
  - › What each medication is used for.

- › What side effects to expect and what to do if you have any side effects.
- › How to store each medication.
- Ask your health care team if you are not sure about your medications.

## **What about non-prescription medications?**

- Always check with your pharmacist or health care team before taking any over-the-counter medications, including herbal or natural health products, vitamins, or supplements.
- If you have kidney disease, non-prescription medications can also build up in your body. Some of these may damage your kidneys.

## **How can I make sure my medications are OK for my level of kidney function?**

- Remind each of your health care providers that you have kidney disease.
- **Do not** assume everyone knows you have kidney disease.
- When prescribed a new medication, ask if the medication is safe to take with kidney disease.
- **Do not** change pharmacies often. It is safer to use only 1 home pharmacy that has a record of your kidney disease.

# What will happen if a medication is not safe for my level of kidney function?

- Your pharmacist or health care provider may lower the dose (amount) of the medication, or change your prescription to a safer medication.

# What do I do if I have questions?

- If you have any questions, talk to a member of your health care team, like your pharmacist, nurse practitioner, nurse, or doctor.

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 Program  
*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WQ85-2357 © August 2023 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.