

Treating Anemia in End Stage Kidney Disease

For patients on hemodialysis

Read this pamphlet to learn more about:

- What causes anemia
- How to treat anemia during end stage kidney disease
- Where to get more information



What is anemia?

Anemia, also called decreased hemoglobin, happens when your red blood cell levels are below normal. It is a common condition during end stage kidney disease.

What causes anemia?

Hemoglobin is part of red blood cells and carries oxygen to all parts of the body.

People with **low** hemoglobin may have:

- weakness
- fatigue (very tired)
- shortness of breath
- heart palpitations (fast heart beat)

The kidneys play a part in anemia. They produce a hormone called erythropoietin (EPO). EPO allows bone marrow to make red blood cells.

When you are having hemodialysis, your kidneys are not working as well. They produce less EPO, which is why anemia is common during end stage kidney disease. But some hemodialysis patients make enough EPO, so not all patients need to be treated for anemia.

Treatment

You will have blood tests every month to check your hemoglobin and iron levels. Your hemoglobin level should be in the range of 90 to 120 g/L.

What medicines are used to treat anemia?

Red Blood Cell Stimulating Agents

The medications that help make red blood cells are:

- Darbepoetin (Aranesp®)
Given once a week during hemodialysis
- Erythropoietin (Eprex®)
Given 3 times a week during hemodialysis

Iron

Iron also helps to make hemoglobin in your body.

- If your iron is low, then the nurse may give you iron through the machine into your blood during your dialysis.
- You don't need to keep taking iron pills if you're getting iron during dialysis.

Please talk to your health care team if you have any questions about anemia.



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