

SKIN

Patient TIPS for Living with Kidney Disease

People with chronic kidney disease may experience many changes in their skin. The decrease in size and activity of your sweat glands leads to itchy, dry skin. Deposits of calcium/phosphate crystals in the skin may irritate the nerve endings and cause itching. Skin pigments which would normally be removed from the body in the urine, can also build up causing a change in the colour of your skin. Abnormal blood clotting and fragile blood vessels may cause easy bruising or an occasional purplish discoloration beneath the surface of the skin.

Some common signs & symptoms include:

- Dry, itchy skin
- Thin, brittle nails
- Pale yellowish-bronze skin colour
- Bruising

Things you can do to help yourself:

1. DO NOT use regular soap; try lanolin based soaps (Dove, Tone).
2. DO NOT use hot water in baths or shower.
3. Pat your skin dry after bathing and apply moisturizing lotions while skin is still damp.
4. Avoid any alcohol based oils, creams.

5. Take good care of your nails. Keep them short, clean and watch for cracks that could become infected.
6. If you find you need to scratch a lot, wear cotton gloves when you sleep.
7. Check skin for increased bruising. If this occurs, report it to your physician.
8. Follow your dietary allowances carefully (phosphorus restriction). Take your calcium pills (phosphate binders) as ordered.
9. Use a humidifier in your home.

Your physician may prescribe a medication to help decrease the itchiness, or may refer you to a skin specialist if the problem is severe.

If itching interferes with:

- **your ability to manage daily activities**
 - **your sleep**
- or**
- **you have signs of infection (redness, drainage, fever)**
 - **open sores on your skin**

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR

While these symptoms are common to most people with chronic kidney disease, you may respond differently. Listen to your body and be aware of any changes.

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