

Chronic Renal Failure

We were unable to find an acceptable publicly available article on chronic renal failure. However, the NIH has an excellent copyrighted chronic renal failure article at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000471.htm>. You can read this article online at no charge.

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Chronic renal failure is a slowly progressive loss of renal function over a period of months or years.

Signs and symptoms

Initially chronic renal failure is asymptomatic.

As kidney functions deteriorates, early symptoms may include:

- Weight loss
- Nausea, vomiting
- Malaise
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Hiccups
- Itching

As the disease progresses, symptoms may include:

- Increased or decreased urine output
- Urination at night
- Easy bruising/bleeding;
- Blood in vomit or stools
- Drowsiness, somnolence, lethargy
- Confusion/delirium
- Coma
- Muscle twitching/cramps
- Seizures
- Uremic frost on skin
- Decreased sensation in hands or feet

Other symptoms can include:

- Thirst
- Abnormally dark or light skin

- Breath odor
- High blood pressure
- Loss of appetite
- Agitation

Diagnosis

In many chronic renal failure patients, previous renal disease or other underlying disease is already known. Various blood tests (BUN, creatinine, potassium, acid-base balance, magnesium, erythropoietin), urine tests (protein, casts) and abdominal scans (X-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound) can help clarify the diagnosis.

Causes

The two main causes are **diabetes** and **hypertension**. Other causes include:

- Glomerulonephritis
- Polycystic kidney disease
- Reflux nephropathy
- Obstructive uropathy
- Kidney stones and infection
- Analgesic nephropathy
- Alport syndrome (an inherited disorder of basement membranes in which defective genes for collagen proteins are associated with progressive loss of renal function (and also deafness and eye abnormalities))
- Lupus erythematosus (lupus nephritis)

Treatment

- Control symptoms
- Reduce complications (e.g. hypertension)
- Slow disease progression (ACEi/ARBs)
- Correct anemia
- Restrict fluid intake
- Dialysis or Renal Transplant for ESRD (End Stage Renal Disease)
- Join a support group

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