Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and Skin Disorders

People with CKD, especially those on dialysis, often have problems with their skin.

Causes of Skin Problems:
- less active sweat glands due to change in size, can lead to itchy and dry skin
- deposits of calcium/phosphate crystals in the skin may irritate the nerve endings which can cause itching
- skin pigmentation, which is normally removed from the body in the urine, can build up causing a change in the colour of your skin (yellowish-bronze colour)
- abnormal clotting and fragile blood vessels may cause easy bruising or purplish discolouration beneath the surface of the skin.

Some Common Signs and Symptoms:
- dry, scaling and itchy skin
- thin, brittle nails
- pale yellowish-bronze skin colour
- bruising.

While these symptoms are common to most people with CKD, everyone responds differently. Listen to your body and be aware of any changes.

Things You Should Do:
- Apply cold compress to relieve itchiness.
- Apply lotion, oil based cream or cooking oil to your skin.
- If you feel itchy, keep your nails short and clean to prevent scratching. Wear cotton gloves when you sleep. If itching continues, discuss it with your health care provider.
- Tell your health care providers about increased bruising.
- Follow your dietary guidelines carefully (phosphate restriction).
- Take your calcium pills (phosphate binders) as ordered
- Check your feet for cracks or open areas that could become infected. Your CKD registered nurse provides routine foot care screens. Attend any podiatrist or foot care referrals.

The most effective way to deal with skin problems is to prevent them.

Tips For Healthy Skin:
- Use lanolin based soaps (Dove™, Tone™), instead of regular soaps.
- Do not use hot water in baths or showers.
- Pat your skin dry instead of rubbing it.
- Use a skin lotion or baby oil after your bath or shower when your skin is still damp to keep your skin from drying out.
- Wear soft cotton fabrics. Do not wear wool and rough polyesters.
- Use small amounts of laundry detergent because it can irritate your skin.
- Do not use any alcohol based oils and creams.
- Use scent free products because scent additives can irritate your skin
- Your health care provider may prescribe special creams or medications to help decrease the itchiness. You may be referred you to a skin specialist if the problem is severe.