



## Pocket Guide to Managing Chronic Kidney Disease Associated Pruritus (CKD-aP)

A tool to help patients and caregivers have more effective dialogue with their healthcare teams.

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## **Chronic Kidney Disease-Associated Pruritus** (also known as CKD-aP)

**QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR**

## What is CKD-aP?

CKD-aP is defined as moderate to severe itching that is directly related to kidney disease. It is often a distressing and overlooked condition found primarily in individuals with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD), such as those on hemodialysis, and is believed to affect approximately 30-70% of kidney patients.

## How will I know if I have CKD-aP?

CKD-aP can be difficult to diagnose because its severity may vary over time from mild to moderate to severe, and the itch may occur randomly or frequently. CKD-aP may also occur anytime in relation to dialysis—before, during, or after—as well as impact various parts of a kidney patient's body (face, back, or arm, for example). Further complicating the diagnosis of CKD-aP is the fact that no visual presentation on the skin may occur although you

may see marks/lesions from persistent scratching. Due to all these factors, the best practice is for physicians to consider any itching in dialysis patients as being related to CKD-aP unless there is a clear alternative explanation.

## How can CKD-aP impact my health?

This condition has been associated with poor quality of life, poor sleep, and depression. It is often described by dialysis patients as “an itch you just can’t get to.”

CKD-aP has also been associated with increased hospitalizations and/or death in hemodialysis patients due to the increased risk of inflammation and infections due to an individual’s continual scratching of the skin in an attempt to satisfy the ‘itch’ which can lead to lesions or broken/damaged skin.



## What caused my CKD-aP? Will it go away?



Most commonly, CKD-aP is attributed to toxin build-up, peripheral neuropathy, immune system dysregulation, or opioid dysregulation. Some kidney patients with advanced kidney disease and those on hemodialysis have reported that the itch comes and goes periodically and varies in severity, but many more report that the itch is constant. Kidney patients who have been transplanted have reported that only then did the itch go away.

## How do I manage my CKD-aP?

Unfortunately, there has been frustratingly little innovation in the treatment of many side effects experienced by those with kidney diseases. Treatments commonly prescribed for CKD-aP, such as antihistamines and phosphorus binders to various lotions, have had very little to no effect on this condition. In 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a treatment for CKD-aP, a breakthrough, first-in-class therapy for this condition administered to in-center hemodialysis patients at the end of their dialysis sessions. Generically known as Difelikefalin (pronounced “die-fella-keff-a-lin”) or KORSUVA Injection, this prescription medicine is used to treat the symptoms of moderate to severe itching associated with CKD-aP in adults undergoing hemodialysis.

## Helpful Tips

- CKD-aP is common among kidney patients on hemodialysis.
- CKD-aP is generally an under-recognized and under-treated condition.
- Some of the most used treatments for CKD-aP lack data and are not effective.
- It's important to be a self-advocate and talk to your healthcare team if you are experiencing moderate to severe itching as a kidney patient.
- In 2021, the FDA approved a treatment to help manage CKD-aP in adult kidney patients receiving hemodialysis. Discuss all treatment options with your healthcare team to determine


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