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# End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)

ESRD occurs when kidneys lose their ability to filter waste, leading to a buildup of toxins and fluid in the body.

## Common Symptoms:

**Symptoms may differ from person to person**

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Confusion
- Fluid retention
- Itching due to excess waste products in the blood
- Muscle cramps
- Anemia
- Electrolyte imbalances (potassium, sodium)

## Causes:

**Potential causes:**

- Diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney infections or inflammation are the leading causes of kidney failure.

## Hospice Considerations:

End Stage Renal Disease has no cure, dialysis is the main treatment, allowing patients to live longer.

- **Declining Health:** When the patient's health declines despite dialysis or when dialysis is no longer an option or desired.
- **Symptom Burden:** When symptoms such as severe fluid retention, nausea, and weakness become difficult to manage and affect the patient's quality of life.

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- **End-of-Life Care:** When discussions about transitioning from dialysis to comfort-focused care become relevant for the patient and family.

## Symptom Management Tips:

- **Fluid retention:** Diuretics and fluid restrictions help manage swelling and breathing difficulties.
- **Itching:** Antihistamines and topical lotions can relieve discomfort from uremic pruritus (itching due to high waste levels).
- **Nausea and vomiting:** Antiemetic medications such as ondansetron can help alleviate these symptoms.
- **Fatigue and weakness:** Encourage rest, as energy levels are typically very low.

## How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Diet Control:** Follow a kidney-friendly diet, limiting protein, potassium, and phosphorus to reduce strain on the kidneys.
  - **Fluid Management:** Manage fluid intake as directed by the care team to prevent overloading the kidneys.
  - **Skin Care:** Use gentle moisturizers to prevent itching, which is common in kidney failure.
- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Medication Assistance:** Help the patient manage medications, including those that manage electrolyte balance and blood pressure.
  - **Monitor Symptoms:** Keep an eye out for signs of fluid overload, confusion, or electrolyte imbalances.
  - **Provide Emotional Support:** Kidney disease can be emotionally draining; offer a listening ear and help with discussing care goals.

St. Francis Reflections is always available to assist with any questions or concerns 24/7

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