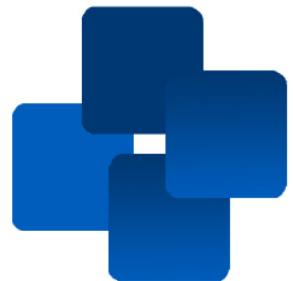


Patient Information

Potassium Binder Medications

Pharmacy Department



This leaflet explains the causes of hyperkalaemia, its common symptoms and possible treatments.

What is hyperkalaemia ?

Hyperkalaemia is a condition where you have too much potassium in your blood. Potassium helps to keep your nerves and muscles working properly. However, if you have too much potassium in your blood it can affect the way your heart works, causing it to go into an abnormal rhythm which can be very dangerous. Hyperkalaemia is diagnosed by a blood test that measures the potassium levels in your blood.

What are the symptoms of hyperkalaemia ?

Hyperkalaemia does not usually have any obvious symptoms so blood tests are the most common way of diagnosing it. Occasionally, hyperkalaemia can cause:

- Feeling very tired or weak
- Stomach pain or nausea
- Dizziness
- Muscle pain or cramps
- Trouble breathing
- Weakness in the arms and/or legs
- Unusual heartbeat or chest pains

How is hyperkalaemia treated ?

Treatment will depend on how high the levels of potassium are in your blood. If they are only slightly above normal, you may not need any treatment but will have regular blood tests to make sure that everything stays the same. Treatment may include:

⇒ Changing your diet

First line treatment is normally avoiding foods high in potassium. Your doctor may refer you to see a dietitian who can advise you about a low potassium diet, or give you information about a low potassium diet.

For more information on how to eat a low potassium diet visit:
www.kidneycareuk.org/about-kidney-health/living-kidney-disease/lifestyle/

⇒ **Changing or altering the dose of your current medications**

Your doctor may reduce the dose of some of the medicines that you are taking, or advise you to stop taking them all together if they are affecting your potassium levels. For example, some medicines for high blood pressure, which is common in people with kidney disease, can cause or worsen hyperkalaemia. Stopping or reducing the dose of these can help to lower your potassium levels - **Always follow your doctor's advice regarding medicines.**

⇒ **Adding a new medicine**

Potassium binders - The advantage of these are that they allow some preventative medication that cause high potassium levels to continue to be taken. These work by removing the extra potassium from your body to your faeces (poo). There are two types of potassium binders called **patiromer** and **sodium zirconium cyclosilicate**.

How to take these medications

Patiromer - one sachet once a day. Avoid other medications for 3 hours before and after the dose of patiromer.

Mix sachet with water and stir until it is thoroughly mixed, as follows:

- Prepare about 40 mL (3 tablespoons) of water in a glass
- Add the required number of patiromer sachets and stir
- Add about 40 mL (3 tablespoons) of additional water and stir thoroughly. The powder does not dissolve but forms a suspension, which might feel grainy
- You may add more water to the mixture to help you swallow the medicine

Sodium zirconium cyclosilicate - one sachet once a day.

- Open the sachet and pour the powder into a drinking glass with approximately 45 mL of still (non-carbonated) water
- Stir well and drink the tasteless liquid straight away
- The powder does not dissolve and the liquid appears cloudy. The white powder will settle in the glass quickly. If this happens, stir the liquid again and drink it all up
- Rinse the glass with more water and drink it all up to take all the medicine

What side effects are likely?

Patiromer

The following side effects have been reported:

Common (may affect up to 1 in 10 people)

- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain or wind
- Low blood magnesium seen in tests

Uncommon (may affect up to 1 in 100 people)

- Nausea or vomiting

Sodium zirconium cyclosilicate

Common side effects (may affect up to 1 in 10 people)

- Feeling tired, or have muscle weakness or cramps, this may be a sign that your blood potassium has become too low. Talk to your doctor immediately if these symptoms become severe.
- A build up of fluid in the tissues, leading to swelling anywhere in your body (usually in the feet and ankles).

Not known (frequency cannot be estimated from the available data)

- Abdominal pain or discomfort, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation.
- You start to have itching of the skin or recognise redness or scaling of your skin.

Additional information

Both of these medications reduce the amount of potassium in the body allowing other medication to be increased to a higher dose. If you stop taking potassium binders, it is important to tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist since your potassium levels will increase.

It is important to have regular blood tests to monitor your potassium levels.