Uremia, Kidney Failure

Uremia is a condition resulting from kidney (*renal*) failure. Kidney failure means that the kidneys do not work well. When the kidneys fail toxic waste products build up abnormally in the blood stream. This build up is called uremia or azotemia. Untreated kidney failure leads to more buildup of toxic substances and eventually leads to death.

CAUSES

In the US, the most common causes or kidney failure are:

- Diseases that start in the kidney.
  - Glomerulonephritis.
  - Interstitial disease.
  - recurrent infection.
- Other diseases that can affect and harm the kidney.
  - Untreated diabetes.
  - Untreated high blood pressure.

Types

There are two main forms of renal failure. It is divided into acute renal failure (which comes on suddenly), and chronic renal failure (which comes on slowly and sometimes over a long time).

- Acute renal failure (ARF) shows itself with a decrease in urine production (*oliguria*). The cause must be immediately found to stop the progress. Dialysis may be necessary until the underlying cause(s) is treated.
- Chronic renal failure (CRF) gives few symptoms initially. It can be the complication of a variety of kidney diseases. End-stage renal disease (ESRD) is the ultimate outcome. When this happens, dialysis is usually required. There may be a need to consider a kidney transplant.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of kidney failure can depend on how rapidly the failure comes on and how severe it is. They include:

- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Loss of appetite.
- Confusion.
- Sleepiness.
- Seizures.
- Headache.
- Loss of energy.
- Sore mouth.

DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver may first suspect kidney failure by doing a screening urinalysis and blood tests. Sometimes, x-rays and imaging tests (such as ultrasound) can help to narrow down the exact reason for the kidney failure.

TREATMENT

The treatment of renal failure depends on the cause. Treatment can be successful if the underlying cause can be treated. If treatment is not successful, kidney dialysis can be used to clean the blood. Many people successfully undergo dialysis for many years. In some cases, a kidney transplant may be suggested. Kidney transplants are one of the most successful of all organ transplants.

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