

# PEP CONNECT

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PATIENT  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAM

## *Hemoglobin (Hgb)*

**Healthy hemoglobin for a dialysis patient is between 10 and 12. What is your hemoglobin?**

**Week #1**—As a dialysis patient why do I need to know about hemoglobin? What is hemoglobin?

Learn about hemoglobin, what a healthy hemoglobin level should be for a dialysis patient, and the symptoms and treatment of low and high hemoglobin. How is low hemoglobin related to anemia? Why is my hemoglobin checked regularly?

**Week #2**—Do you know your hemoglobin level? **Is your hemoglobin level between 10 and 12?**

Chart your hemoglobin for the next three months on the graph provided. Look on the lobby bulletin board during this week to review the hemoglobin information. Enter your name in a drawing to win a prize. Have fun and complete the PEP CONNECT word search.

**Week #3**—What is Epogen® (EPO)? Why are you taking it?

Look on the lobby bulletin board during this week to review the EPO information.

**Week #4**—Review what you learned this month. Share with your health care team what you are doing to improve your hemoglobin if needed. We care and want to help you reach your goal.

*The healthier you are the better you feel! You are in charge!*

### What is hemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen from your lungs through your bloodstream to the brain and other organs and tissues. Without enough hemoglobin in your body, your organs will not get the oxygen they need to function properly. Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) can cause your body to produce fewer red blood cells than normal. **A healthy hemoglobin for a dialysis patient is generally between 10 and 12.**



Enjoy Life



Red Blood Cells

### Why is my hemoglobin checked regularly?

To find out your hemoglobin your doctor will do a complete blood count (CBC) test. Your hemoglobin is checked regularly to:

- make sure the level stays between 10 and 12
- determine if EPO is needed
- determine if the EPO dose should be adjusted

### How is low hemoglobin related to anemia?

Most patients with kidney disease will develop anemia, particularly those on dialysis. Anemia develops when there are not enough red blood cells in the body. This can be detected when there is low hemoglobin in the blood. **Low hemoglobin for a dialysis patient is generally less than 10.**

### SYMPTOMS OF ANEMIA (LOW HEMOGLOBIN)

It is important that you recognize the symptoms of anemia so you can receive appropriate and timely treatment. These symptoms may also be related to other illnesses.

Shortness of breath  
Chest pain  
Dizziness or fainting  
Rapid heartbeat  
Tired

Weakness  
Numbness or coldness in your hands  
Headaches  
Pale skin, including decreased pinkness of lips, gums, lining of the eyelids, nail beds, and palms

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### **What can I do if I have low hemoglobin?**

Your doctor may recommend lifestyle and other changes such as:

Getting enough rest	A blood transfusion
Limiting activities	Taking EPO medication
Eating a well-balanced diet	

### **What can I eat, if I need to increase my hemoglobin?**

See your dietitian.



### **What is high hemoglobin?**

**For a dialysis patient a high hemoglobin is generally above 12. Persistent levels much higher than 12 are not good for your health and may lead to dangerous blood clots and put your life at risk.**

### **What are the symptoms of high hemoglobin?**

These symptoms may also be related to other illnesses.

Dizziness	Blood clotting
Mental confusion	Swelling
Blush color cast on the skin	Sudden numbness
Impaired circulation	Temporary loss of vision or hearing has been experienced by some

### **What can I do if I have persistently high hemoglobin levels?**

Check with the doctor or nurse to see if your EPO needs to be adjusted.

To learn your hemoglobin level, check your lab results for this month or talk to the nurse or dietitian. How does your hemoglobin compare to what you learned?

If your hemoglobin is between 10 and 12, that is great! Encourage others to work toward this goal.

## PATIENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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If your hemoglobin is much lower than 10 or much higher than 12, this is not good for your health. Think about what you can do to achieve your goal.

**Whether your hemoglobin is normal or not, chart your hemoglobin for this month on the graph provided . Do this for the next three months to see your progress.**

Look on the bulletin board to review the hemoglobin information. The thermometer shows the healthy hemoglobin range of 10 and 12. Have you made changes to achieve your goal? Have you changed your diet if needed? Have you checked with the nurse that gives EPO to see if a change is needed? Enter your name in a drawing to win a prize. Have fun and complete the PEP CONNECT word search.

### What is Epogen® (EPO) ? Why am I taking it?

EPO is a protein normally made in the body by the kidney that controls the production of red blood cells. As kidney function declines, so does the kidney's ability to make EPO, which leads to anemia (low hemoglobin). EPO is also a man-made injectable drug used to treat low hemoglobin. This drug may be used to reduce the need for blood transfusions.



Make sure you get your EPO regularly during your treatments if you receive it. If your hemoglobin is low, this medication helps to keep it where it should be. **Missing a treatment due to hospitalization or for other reasons could cause you to miss your injection, which could lower your hemoglobin.** An infection can also reduce how well the EPO works. Staying healthy reduces your risk of infection.

If you do not know if you receive EPO or how often you receive it, check with your nurse. If you are on hemodialysis and receive EPO, it is injected into your dialysis lines while you are on dialysis. If you are on home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis (PD), check with your nurse.

EPO will not work unless your body has enough iron. Iron is a part of hemoglobin, which helps blood cells carry the oxygen the body needs for energy. Iron is what makes blood red. Your doctor or dietitian may tell you to eat foods rich in iron. If you cannot get enough iron from your diet, your doctor may prescribe an iron supplement or you may get an IV (intravenous) injection in the dialysis lines while on dialysis. IV iron works by providing the body with the necessary amount of iron. Look on the lobby bulletin board to review the EPO and iron information.

Share with your health care team what you are doing to improve your hemoglobin if needed. We want to help you take care of yourself and reach your goal.