

Anorexia

Anorexia is a nonspecific symptom that may be an indication of inadequate dialysis and uremia. Depression, GI disturbances, taste disorders and mechanical causes may also contribute to anorexia.

TREATMENT PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

1. Ensure patient is well dialyzed (a KT/V of at least 1.4).
2. Assess for signs of depression – may be manifested as a loss of desire to eat.
3. If nausea is present use antiemetics before meals.
4. Assess for any signs of gastroparesis or diarrhea and treat as appropriate.
5. Constipation should be assessed for and treated.
6. Pain should be worked up and treated.
7. Ensure there is no mechanical cause that can interfere with eating (problems swallowing, poor dentition, ill fitting dentures).
8. Taste disorders – treat sinusitis or other infections
Zinc 220 mg qd.¹
9. Dry mouth – Pilocarpine 5-10 mg three times per day²
Saliva substitute every 1-2 hours
Assess for drugs that cause dry mouth and reduce dose or try to substitute for another drug (use reglan or haldol instead of compazine, use sinequan or trazodone instead of elavil)
10. Give a trial of appetite stimulants – Megace 40-400mg have been used in ESRD³⁻⁵
Marinol 2.5-5 mg 2-3 times a day⁶
Prednisone 10-20 mg 1-2 times a day
If the patient has no benefit within a week, either increase the dose or discontinue the medication to avoid unnecessary side effects.

References:

1. Vreman HF, et al. Taste, smell and zinc metabolism in patients with chronic renal failure. *Nephron* 1980; 26:163.
2. Miller LJ, Oral pilocarpine for radiation-induced xerostomia. *The Cancer Bulletin*. 1993; 45:549.

3. Lien, YH, & Ruffenach, SJ, Low dose megestrol increases serum albumin in malnourished dialysis patients, *The Int J of Artificial Organs* 1996; 19:147
4. Boccanfuso JA, Hutton M, & McAllister, B, The effects of megestrol acetate on nutritional parameters in a dialysis population, *J of Renal Nutrition* 2000; 10:36.
5. Bruera, E, Macmillan K, Kuehn N, Hanson, J et al. A controlled trial of megestrol acetate on appetite, caloric intake, nutritional status, and other symptoms in patients with advanced cancer, *Cancer* 1990; 66:1279.
6. Beal Je, Olson R, Laubenstgein, L et al. Dronabinol as a treatment for anorexia associated with weight loss in patients with AIDS. *J Pain Symptom Manage* 1995; 10:89.