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Acute kidney injury Initial assessment

Adult Health Nursing | Initial assessment

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Fictional educational example. Individualize using verified patient findings, authorized treatment and current local protocols. No real patient record or observed outcome is claimed.

Clinical assessment

Subjective: Nausea, fatigue and much less urine than usual.

Objective findings and required checks: Urine output has fallen and renal markers are rising; volume status needs careful assessment.

Physical examination and investigations: Trend renal function, electrolytes, urine output, medicines and investigations for the cause, including obstruction when suspected.

Supply actual values, units, timing and trends during supervised application. Do not invent missing clinical data.

Clinical focus and pathophysiology

Acute kidney injury: Acute loss of kidney function disrupts fluid, electrolyte and waste regulation.

Medical / surgical management

Escalate low output, assess fluid status and implement cause-specific treatment with renal-dose review.

Illustrative drug and treatment study

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Medicine / treatment	Purpose	Nursing checks
Medication review	Identify nephrotoxic or renally cleared medicines	Prescriber or pharmacist adjusts the regimen
prescribed fluid or other therapy	Treat the assessed cause	Monitor for both underfilling and overload.

Treatment examples are not a prescription. Verify the authorized product, dose, route, timing, contraindications and current local product information.

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Nursing care plan

Nursing diagnoses use original clinical problem wording. They are not the licensed NANDA-I classification. Verify any formal label or code against your institution's licensed current edition; select actual or risk diagnoses only when supported by assessment.

Context task: Establish the immediate clinical priorities and verify the baseline before assuming a diagnosis.

Set individualized measurable targets and an exact review time. Select actual or risk statements only when supported by assessment.

Assessment: subjective / objective	Nursing diagnosis: original problem wording	Short- and longer-term goals	Nursing interventions with rationale	Evaluation
Ask: Ask about dysuria, urgency, retention and usual urinary pattern. Assess: Assess output, discomfort, bladder findings and relevant urine tests.	Urinary elimination affected by illness or obstruction. Possible factors: altered bladder function, irritation or drainage difficulty. Validate against the patient's assessment.	Short-term: After the first indicated intervention, at the documented review time: Urine drainage and comfort improve within the agreed review interval. Longer-term: Before the clinically approved transition or agreed follow-up: Explains hygiene, catheter instructions if applicable and follow-up needs.	1. Measure urine trends and assess pain, retention or blocked drainage promptly. Rationale: Obstruction and low output may require urgent intervention. 2. Support privacy and indicated hygiene while avoiding unnecessary catheterization. Rationale: Comfort and infection prevention support recovery. 3. Collect ordered samples correctly and implement prescribed treatment. Rationale: Reliable assessment guides targeted management. 4. Escalate low output, assess fluid status and implement cause-specific treatment with renal-dose review. Rationale: Acute loss of kidney function disrupts fluid, electrolyte and waste regulation. The condition-specific plan addresses the underlying problem while response is monitored.	Record the baseline and reassessed finding, the time and whether this goal is met, partly met or not met. If not met, reassess causes and revise or escalate. Do not record an unobserved improvement.

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Assessment: subjective / objective	Nursing diagnosis: original problem wording	Short- and longer-term goals	Nursing interventions with rationale	Evaluation
Ask: Ask about breathlessness, swelling and recent weight gain. Assess: Monitor edema, respiratory findings, weight, intake/output and electrolytes.	Fluid accumulation affecting comfort or function. Possible factors: impaired fluid handling or excess retention. Validate against the patient's assessment.	Short-term: After the first indicated intervention, at the documented review time: No progression of respiratory distress or edema occurs during the observation period. Longer-term: Before the clinically approved transition or agreed follow-up: Explains prescribed fluid, salt, weight-monitoring and follow-up instructions.	1. Use consistent weighing and intake/output records. Rationale: Comparable measurements help identify fluid trends. 2. Assess respiratory changes and elevate the head of the bed if tolerated. Rationale: Pulmonary fluid accumulation may compromise breathing. 3. Implement only prescribed fluid limits and diuretic treatment; monitor renal function and electrolytes. Rationale: Treatment must balance fluid removal with circulation and electrolyte safety.	Record the baseline and reassessed finding, the time and whether this goal is met, partly met or not met. If not met, reassess causes and revise or escalate. Do not record an unobserved improvement.
Ask: Ask about medicine names, timing, symptoms and non-prescribed products. Assess: Review observations, medication record and relevant drug-specific investigations.	Possible treatment-related harm requiring prompt assessment. Possible factors: adverse medication effects or an administration problem. Validate against the patient's assessment.	Short-term: After the first indicated intervention, at the documented review time: The suspected adverse event is escalated and no further avoidable exposure occurs. Longer-term: Before the clinically approved transition or agreed follow-up: Explains the revised medication plan and warning symptoms before discharge.	1. Assess airway, breathing, circulation and the time course of symptoms. Rationale: Serious adverse reactions require immediate stabilization. 2. Escalate suspected toxicity and follow the authorized hold, monitoring or antidote instructions. Rationale: Treatment decisions depend on the drug and clinical severity. 3. Document and communicate the reaction and reconcile the medicine list. Rationale: Accurate records reduce repeat exposure and support pharmacovigilance.	Record the baseline and reassessed finding, the time and whether this goal is met, partly met or not met. If not met, reassess causes and revise or escalate. Do not record an unobserved improvement.

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Assessment: subjective / objective	Nursing diagnosis: original problem wording	Short- and longer-term goals	Nursing interventions with rationale	Evaluation
Ask: Ask what the learner already knows and wants to understand. Assess: Use teach-back or demonstration to identify specific gaps.	Learning needs about the condition and care plan. Possible factors: new information, complex treatment or limited prior teaching. Validate against the patient's assessment.	Short-term: After the first indicated intervention, at the documented review time: Explains the most important immediate action in their own words. Longer-term: Before the clinically approved transition or agreed follow-up: Demonstrates the agreed care skills and names follow-up and warning signs.	1. Assess language, literacy, hearing, vision and preferred learning method. Rationale: Accessible teaching improves understanding. 2. Teach a few condition-specific points using plain language and demonstration. Rationale: Focused information is easier to retain and apply. 3. Use teach-back, correct misunderstandings and provide an accessible written plan. Rationale: Checking understanding supports safer self-management. 4. Explain fluid instructions, avoidance of unapproved nephrotoxic products and repeat renal testing. Rationale: Condition-specific teaching connects the treatment plan to safe continuing care.	Record the baseline and reassessed finding, the time and whether this goal is met, partly met or not met. If not met, reassess causes and revise or escalate. Do not record an unobserved improvement.

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Health education and continuing care

Explain fluid instructions, avoidance of unapproved nephrotoxic products and repeat renal testing.

Transition only after clinical readiness is confirmed. Reconcile medicines, check access and caregiver support, and document who will review the patient and when.

Urgent warning signs

Hyperkalemia-related signs, pulmonary edema, severe acidosis or worsening consciousness needs urgent review.

Evaluation and conclusion

For each goal, document met, partly met or not met using observed evidence and the review time. Reassess and revise if progress is inadequate. Individual assessment, prioritized care and coordinated review guide this topic.

Quick Revision

- Acute loss of kidney function disrupts fluid, electrolyte and waste regulation.

- Priority concerns: Urinary elimination affected by illness or obstruction; Fluid accumulation affecting comfort or function; Possible treatment-related harm requiring prompt assessment; Learning needs about the condition and care plan.

- Hyperkalemia-related signs, pulmonary edema, severe acidosis or worsening consciousness needs urgent review.

- Explain fluid instructions, avoidance of unapproved nephrotoxic products and repeat renal testing.

Exam / viva: Which finding changes the order of priorities, and what must be escalated immediately?

References

Nursing Fundamentals, 2e - Ernstmeyer & Christman (editors), Open RN / WisTech Open, 2024
https://wtcs.pressbooks.pub/nursingfundamentals/

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