



Heartland Kidney
Network

We're Here For You.

MY LIFE: COPING WITH DIALYSIS

Coping with dialysis is not easy and everyone deals with this life changing experience differently. Sometimes the strategies you used for other life changes don't work or they need to change to fit your life with dialysis. As a person living with kidney disease it is easy to get down sometimes; everyone feels blue or sad once in a while. But these feelings usually don't last long and are gone in a couple of days. So what if the feelings don't go away or get worse? These feelings are real and to cope you may need new ways to deal with it. You may be dealing with depression.

Depression is a common but serious illness which many people on dialysis cope with. When you have depression, it interferes with daily life and causes pain for both you and those who care about you. Many people never seek treatment for depression; this sometimes is because they are embarrassed. But depression is an illness just like kidney disease, hypertension, and diabetes, and therefore can get better with treatment. If you are having feelings of depression, you may not experience all the same symptoms as other people with depression because it's different for everyone. Medications, therapy, and other methods can help treat depression so it no longer interferes with your daily life.

SIMILAR SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION & UREMIA

Often depression is not diagnosed because many of the symptoms are similar to uremia. Uremia is caused by waste products that build up in the blood. When the kidneys stop working, uremia occurs. Even when you are on dialysis treatments you may experience some of the problems of uremia.

Common Signs & Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment

Common Signs & Symptoms of Uremia

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite, may lead to weight loss and malnutrition
- Leg cramps
- Itching
- Sleep problems
- Difficulty thinking clearly and problems with your memory
- Shortness of breath or palpitations
- Restless legs
- Weak bones and/or pain in your bones
- Joint problems
- Anemia, which causes fatigue, inability to do usual activities, and shortness of breath
- Diminished sex drive
- Depression

For more information or to file a grievance please contact the Heartland Kidney Network at: Heartland Kidney Network • 7306 NW Tiffany Springs Pkwy. • Suite 230 • Kansas City, MO 64153
Toll-Free Patient Line: (800) 444-9965 • net12@nw12.esrd.net • www.heartlandkidney.org

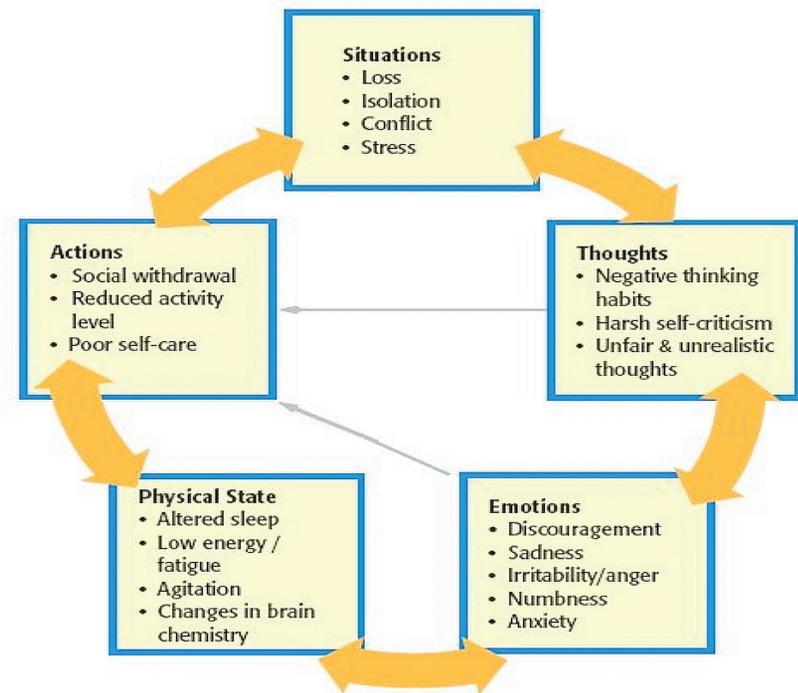
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HOW CAN I GET HELP

If you have depression, you may feel exhausted, helpless, and hopeless. It may be extremely difficult to take any action to help yourself. But as you begin to recognize your depression and begin treatment, you will start to feel better.

- Do not wait too long to get evaluated or treated. There is research showing the longer one waits, the greater the impairment can be down the road. Try to see a professional as soon as possible.
- Try to be active and exercise. Go to a movie, a ball game, or another event or activity that you once enjoyed.
- Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative. Try not to isolate yourself, and let others help you.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Do not expect to suddenly “snap out of” your depression. Often during treatment for depression, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depressed mood lifts.
- Postpone important decisions, such as getting married or divorced or changing jobs, until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
- Remember that positive thinking will replace negative thoughts as your depression responds to treatment.
- Continue to educate yourself about depression. Other resources include: The American Association of Kidney Patients (www.aakp.org), The National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov), The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (www.dbsalliance.org), and National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org).



MY QUESTIONS

Ask your Care Team: I have some symptoms that are listed, what can I do? Where can I get some more help? What other signs should I look out for?

Sources: American Association of Kidney Patients. Understanding Depression in Kidney Disease Brochure. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. National Institute of Health National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. NIH Publication No. 12-6059, 2011.

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