



How to Manage

Depression

This guide will help you understand:

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This guide is written for people living with kidney disease and those who help care for them. It does not replace advice from your healthcare team (for example, your nephrologist, nurses, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, and family doctor).

What is Depression?

Depression is strong feelings of ongoing sadness and unhappiness that last for weeks or months.

- Depression can lead to other physical and emotional health problems
- Depression is complicated – a person who is depressed cannot just “snap out of it” or “cheer up”



If your sadness does not go away or gets in the way of your everyday life, it might be a sign that you are depressed. You may need help or treatment to get better.

What Causes Depression?

It is common for people living with kidney disease to feel some level of sadness, depression, or distress, wherever they are on their kidney journey.

Many things related to kidney disease can contribute to depression. This includes:

- Worries about your health and how it will change
- Symptoms of kidney disease and other health problems
- Side-effects of treatments, including medications or dialysis treatments
- The impact of kidney disease on your life
- Lack of control over your health
- Feeling isolated or alone
- Other mental health or addiction issues

What are the Symptoms of Depression?

Symptoms of depression can show up in different parts of your life. This includes:

- Emotional/Mental Symptoms
 - Crying a lot/crying for no reason
 - Feeling hopeless or worthless
 - Not enjoying things you used to enjoy
 - Feelings of guilt or regret
 - Increased anger and irritability (for example, yelling and screaming)
 - Trouble thinking clearly, concentrating, or remembering
 - Avoiding family and friends
 - Desire to stop, miss, or change treatments
 - Feelings of not wanting to live or wanting to die
- Physical Symptoms
 - Low energy
 - Feeling sluggish or restless and agitated
 - Changes in eating habits
 - Sleeping a lot more than normal or not able to sleep
 - Sexual problems

What Can I Do To Help My Depression?

Find Support

Support from family, friends, and your community can comfort you and help you feel less scared and alone.



- Places to find support:
 - Talk to someone you trust and who is a good listener (for example, a friend or family member)
 - Talk to your family doctor or a member of your healthcare team
 - Talk to someone at a place of worship – spiritual or religious advice may help you feel better
 - Join a kidney disease support program to share stories with other people. Many hospitals and The Kidney Foundation of Canada offer support programs where you can get in touch with others who can share their experiences.
 - Seek counselling by talking to a social worker either at your renal program or in your community
- Learn more about kidney disease
 - People who learn about kidney disease and treatment options often feel more in control
 - Be ready for your appointments with a list of questions and bring a support person if you can. It can be helpful to take notes during your visit to remember the things that are important to you.



About 1 out of every 3 people getting dialysis treatments have some level of depression.

Focus on Things That Make You Feel Better

- Focus on:
 - The positive parts of your life that you are grateful for
 - Things that you can control
- Spend time with people who make you laugh
- Do activities that you enjoy and that help you relax (for example, music, nature, and art)

Exercise and Take Care of Your Body

- Exercise or being active is a good way to improve your mood
- Choose an activity that you are comfortable with and is right for your health and fitness level
- Start slowly with light exercise, such as walking, swimming, or yoga
 - There are also many exercises that can be done while seated
- Go at your own pace – slowly increase the amount and difficulty of your activities

Exercise may also:

- Give you more energy
- Help you manage pain
- Improve your appetite
- Help you sleep better
- Build stronger muscles
- Improve your mood



- If you are already active, talk to your healthcare team about your activities and make a plan to keep doing them

Be safe!

- ✓ Stop and rest if you feel sore, stiff or out of breath
- ✓ Always talk to your healthcare team about how to exercise safely

Improve Your Sleep

Getting good sleep can give you more energy and help you feel better emotionally.



Go to www.ontariorenalnetwork.ca/symptoms and read the Ontario Renal Network's Fatigue Symptom Self-Management Guide for more tips that may help you improve your sleep.

Make Lists of Calming, Enjoyable and Useful Activities

- When you feel anxious, get your list of activities and choose one to try. Include:
 - Activities you enjoy, such as going for a walk, watching your favourite TV shows, or taking a bath or shower
 - Things you can do during dialysis treatments, such as listening to music, reading, and knitting
- Put the chores you are able to do into a daily or weekly schedule – getting them done will help you feel in control

Get Counselling to Help You Cope

With professional counselling you can learn different ways of thinking and behaving to help you cope.

- Counselling can also be called psychotherapy

Your healthcare team can help you connect with a:

- Social Worker
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Psychotherapist



When Should I Talk To My Healthcare Team?

Your healthcare team wants to know if you feel depressed, sad, or worried. Your concerns and questions are important and can be safely shared with your healthcare team. If your feelings of depression do not get better, medication may help to control it. You can discuss medication options with your healthcare team.



If you are thinking about hurting yourself, committing suicide or have tried to commit suicide, tell your healthcare team right away, go to your nearest emergency room, or call 911.

Notes

Where Can I Get More Information?

Mental Health Websites:

- Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
www.camh.ca

Suicide Prevention & Crisis:

- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
www.suicideprevention.ca/need-help
- Crisis Services Canada
www.crisisservicescanada.ca
- Distress and Crisis Ontario
www.dcontario.org
- The Lifeline Canada Foundation
www.thelifelinecanada.ca

Mood disorders:

- Mood Disorders Association of Canada
www.mooddiseases.ca

Sleep:

- Canadian Sleep Society
www.css-scs.ca/resources/brochures
- National Sleep Foundation
www.sleepfoundation.org

Mindfulness:

- Mindful Awareness Stabilization Training (MAST) program
www.stmichaelshospital.com/programs/mentalhealth/mast.php

The Ontario Renal Network gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide.

This document is designed to provide people living with kidney disease with information about depression. It is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional, nor is it intended to provide a comprehensive list of treatment options. As treatment options and standards are constantly evolving, we do not guarantee that the information in this document is current. Always ask your healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

Need this information in an accessible format?

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