



Network

Consumer News

LARGE PRINT VERSION

It's Not All in Your Head

Living with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) touches nearly every aspect of a person's life. Unfortunately, this fact may place you at greater risk of suffering from depression. Depression is very common. It affects nearly one in ten adults in America each year. If you are on dialysis, those rates soar to between 20 and 30 percent.

Depression is serious. If left untreated, it can affect not only how you feel but also your physical health, and can even lead to death. Fortunately, depression is considered to be very treatable.

What Causes Depression

Depression is not a sign of personal weakness. There are a number of factors that may lead to depression such as: medical trauma or other traumatic life event; chronic stress; certain medications; changes in lifestyle; chemical imbalances in the brain; and continuous exposure to violence, neglect, abuse, or poverty.

Treatment and Prevention

Like many illnesses, patients can do things to prevent and treat depression.

Take control – Learn about your kidney disease and treatment. It is easier to cope with something if you understand it and feel more in control.

Balance your thoughts – Thoughts and statements to yourself can influence your mood and physical health. Watch out for negative statements, such as “I never feel good.” They will put you at higher risk of having depression and may negatively affect your health. Instead, use statements to purposely

improve your mood and health, such as “I do have good days.” You may want to make a list of positive statements and post them somewhere you can see them. It may even help to repeat them out loud. This exercise may seem silly at first, but it has been shown to help.

Keep working or consider volunteering – Dialysis patients who work or volunteer feel better and have fewer problems with depression.

Consider your treatment options – Does your current treatment fit your life and needs? Would doing home dialysis work better for you?

Avoid drugs and alcohol – They may make you feel better initially, but overall you will end up feeling worse.

Exercise – Physical activity releases natural chemicals into your body that improve energy and mood.

Accept the support of family and friends – Let your friends and family support you. Many people hide their coping problems and depression out of shame. If you ask for support, you will likely receive it. Make specific requests so others know what you need from them. Example: “I have been staying in bed every morning, can we meet on Friday mornings for coffee so that I have a reason to get out of bed?”

Take time for yourself – People often get very busy with appointments and treatments. It is important for you to find time to do the things you enjoy. This will give you the necessary energy and strength to cope with your kidney disease.

Counseling – Coping with a chronic medical problem is very difficult. You live with it every day and it impacts you in many ways. Counselors may be able to support you in finding new ways of coping. There are many different kinds of counselors. Talk with your doctor and/or social worker if you need a referral.

Medications – Antidepressants help restore the natural balance of chemicals (called neurotransmitters) in the brain. These chemicals affect a person’s mood. Antidepressants are not addictive or habit-forming and they do not provide a “high.” They also do not change a person’s personality. People

usually start to feel better in 2 to 6 weeks. Side effects from antidepressants are usually mild. You should ask your doctor what to expect and what to do if you have a problem with an antidepressant.

Ask to speak with your social worker – Your social worker will help you figure out if it is depression you are experiencing and may suggest something you have not yet thought of.

Tell your doctor your symptoms – Your doctor will want to rule out other medical problems and may refer you to another specialist, or recommend medication.

HOW DEPRESSION AND SADNESS ARE DIFFERENT

Sadness and depression are not the same. It is normal to feel sadness or grief when coping with a serious loss or stressful event. With depression, these feelings may last for months or even years.

Sad Mood

- ✓ I feel down today but hope things get better
- ✓ I don't feel like anything matters today
- ✓ I feel tired
- ✓ I sometimes think about my situation and feel sad
- ✓ I sometimes cry

Depression

- ✓ I feel down most days and feel things will never get better
- ✓ I feel worthless, like I'm no good to anyone
- ✓ I have no real emotions, like I'm numb
- ✓ I can't imagine caring about anything else again
- ✓ I feel angry all the time
- ✓ I cannot stop thinking about my situation
- ✓ I don't care if I feel tired or not, I just want to stay in bed all day and pass the time
- ✓ I can't concentrate or remember

It is sometimes difficult to know if you have depression. Some of the symptoms of depression can actually be a sign of other medical problems. For this reason, it is important to have a discussion with your doctor and care team if you feel depressed.

RELATED WEB RESOURCES

National Institutes of Health

www.nlm.nih.gov

Healthy Minds (A.P.A)

www.healthyminds.org/letstalkfacts.cfm

Medicare Mental Health Benefits

www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/10184.pdf

If you would like the information but do not have access to the Internet, please contact us:

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