

Mental Health Services for People with Kidney Disease

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Many people may be in the early stages of kidney disease and not have any indication something is wrong with their kidneys. There are certain symptoms, however, that could be a sign you have chronic kidney disease (CKD). When chronic kidney disease is detected in the early stages, there are steps you can take to help slow the progression of kidney disease to help you delay or prevent dialysis.

Educate Yourself

Utilize the tools provided by your nephrology team. Ask lots of questions and read up on information regarding CKD. Check out:

- DaVita.com
- KidneySmart.org
- [National Kidney Foundation–http://www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)
- [Medicare Resources for Caregivers–www.medicare.gov/caregivers/](http://www.medicare.gov/caregivers/)

or call 1-888-MyKidney (888-695-4363) to find local kidney education classes in your area. You don't have to be a DaVita patient to attend these classes.

Talk About How You Are Feeling

If you are feeling depressed or having difficulty coping, talk about it with your nephrology social worker and your doctor. They will be able to provide an assessment and supportive counseling, and refer you for additional support services in the community.

Seek Counseling

Outpatient services are available at a variety of different agencies in your community and can also be accessed by the local Department of Human Services/Community Mental Health. See your nephrology social worker for a local referral. Inpatient services are available, but reserved for individuals who are deemed to be at risk for harming themselves or others. If you or someone you know is a risk to themselves or someone else, contact your social worker or local Community Mental Health agency immediately.



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Support Groups

Remember — you are not alone in your struggles with kidney disease and dialysis. There are people in the community who meet periodically to support each other. In many communities, these groups are available to both renal patients and care partners. The NKF offers support groups in many locations. You could also contact your nephrology social worker for other support groups that may be available in your community or at your clinic. Groups such as Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC), the largest dialysis patient organization in America, offer support and camaraderie with other people who are on dialysis or have kidney disease. DPC is dedicated to improving dialysis patients' quality of life through education and advocacy. Membership is free and open to all dialysis and kidney disease patients and their families across the country, regardless of dialysis provider affiliation. You can learn more about DPC at www.dialysispatients.org.

Medicines

There are a number of anti-depressants on the market today with minimal to no side effects. These medicines are effective in treating chemical imbalances in the brain that can lead to depression. Medicine is most successful when used in combination with counseling or other support. Discuss your concerns with your physician, as you may have other treatable medical conditions occurring that can cause increased feelings of depression.

Summary

Remember your mental health affects your physical health and help is available to both people with kidney disease and their care partners. Your healthcare team, is available to provide support to patients and care partners. If you feel you are experiencing depression or difficulty coping, please contact your doctor to further discuss the treatment options available in your area.