

Stress Management Techniques for Patients with Kidney Disease

“If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), learning how to manage stress is important to staying healthy and feeling better.”

Research shows that CKD patients who maintain a positive outlook tend to do better with their kidney disease. These tips will help you feel better and manage stress.

Find Comfort in Nature

Take a walk outdoors somewhere that inspires you. This could be a meadow, a beach or along a river. If you live in a city, visit a park or a reservoir. Listen to the sound of the birds or the lapping of the waves. Take in the colors of the sky and the feeling of your surroundings. When you are feeling stressed, recall one of these times spent in nature.

Connect with Family and Friends

Changes in your diet, anxiety, or changes to your schedule if you receive dialysis treatments can cause you to withdraw from social activities.

Keeping up with favorite pastimes and friends, as well as seeking new social opportunities, adds to your quality of life and helps you take your mind off of your kidney disease.

Practice Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques such as meditation, prayer or deep-breathing techniques can help manage stress and may even help your blood pressure, according to some research. Your workplace, gym, community center or place of worship can help you connect with resources in this area. You may also enjoy practicing such techniques at home.

Simple Meditation

Find a comfortable seated position, either in a chair or on the floor. Sit up straight and tall, relaxing the shoulders away from the ears. If you are seated in a chair, place your feet firmly on the floor in front of you, about the same distance apart as your hips. Gently close your eyes or just rest your eyelids if closing your eyes makes you uncomfortable.

Inhale through the nose, allowing your breath to first fill your lower abdomen, then your lower rib cage, then your upper rib cage. Pause by holding your breath for a brief moment and then release the breath through the nose. Allow your breath to fill and release in the same pattern. Try inhaling the breath for two counts, holding the breath for two counts, and exhaling the breath for two counts. If this feels comfortable, gradually increase up to six counts. As you breathe, think of breathing in health or goodness and exhaling toxins or that which you no longer need.



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The first time you try this exercise, you may find yourself sitting for only a few minutes. After a few sessions, you may find yourself relaxing for 15 or 20 minutes.

Exercise

Controlling conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity are all important to managing your kidney disease. Exercise benefits all of these conditions, as well as CKD. Aside from the physical benefits, exercise can improve your self-image and confidence. If you do not currently exercise, talk to your doctor about creating an exercise program that's right for you. If you already do exercise, talk to your doctor about your current program and ask if there are any changes you can make to improve your health further.

Get Support

Because CKD is a lifelong illness, it's natural to feel like you need additional help at times. If you are feeling stress and anxiety, talk to your doctor or social worker. He or she can talk to you about additional ways to manage stress and connect you with other resources you may need. Online bulletin boards and support groups can be an additional form of support.

Volunteer

If you are feeling down, helping others can sometimes help us take our mind off of our own troubles. Contact a local volunteer matching service, call a non-profit group that supports a favorite interest or ask about volunteer opportunities at your place of worship. For example, if you enjoy sewing, you may volunteer to make quilts for crisis outreach. If you like dogs, you may volunteer to walk dogs at your local animal shelter. If you enjoy reading, you may volunteer to read to children to promote literacy.