



Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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www.lifeoptions.org

Q: Who can I talk to about changes in my body that upset me?

A: Your social worker—and other patients—can help you with concerns about how you look. These concerns are common with kidney disease. In most ways, you may look so healthy that people don't believe you have kidney failure. But with kidney failure, you may also have:

- Scars from access surgery and transplants
- A catheter that stays in your body
- Temporary hair loss (hair usually grows back in a few months)
- Dry or fragile skin that is easy to tear
- Changes in skin color if you don't get enough dialysis

Any of these changes can affect your body image, but you're still you, even with dialysis. It helps some people to think of their scars as battle trophies from their war with kidney disease. Talking to others can help you come to terms with changes in your body so you can feel good about yourself.

What *I* can do to cope with changes in my body:

- Ask to talk with the social worker about concerns about my body.
- Talk with other patients or find a support group where I can talk about how dialysis makes me feel about my body.

- Ask other patients how they hide scars, if my scars bother me.
- Make sure I am getting adequate dialysis if my skin color has changed.
- Ask for a referral to a dermatologist (skin doctor) if my skin tears easily or has dark spots.
- Visit module 5 of Kidney School™: *Coping with Kidney Failure*, and module 11: *Sexuality and Fertility* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more.