



Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: What is *depression* and how do I get help for it?

A: Depression is a very common mental illness that affects mood, thoughts, and body functions like eating and sleeping. The National Institute of Mental Health believes that almost 10% of American adults are depressed in any year—and chronic illness can be a trigger for depression. There is no shame in depression. It is an illness, and it can be treated so you feel better.

Sadness vs. depression: Everyone has times where they feel sad and discouraged, doubt their abilities, and even have sleep problems. These “down” moods may last a few hours or days. Depression lasts longer, and may have some of these symptoms:

- Lasting sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feeling guilty, worthless, helpless, hopeless, restless, or irritable
- Loss of interest in things that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Sleeping or eating more or less than usual
- Fatigue, loss of energy, feeling “slowed down”
- Trouble with focus, memory, making decisions
- Thinking about death or suicide
- Lasting symptoms that don’t get better with treatment, like headaches, digestive problems, and chronic pain

Depression can be treated: Medicines and counseling are two common treatments for depression.

Hope for the future: Two things can help you adjust to kidney failure: hope for a good life, and knowledge. Talking with and reading about other people with kidney failure can help you feel more hopeful. People are alive today who began dialysis more than 30 years ago. People on dialysis can do most, if not all, the things they did before. Many people on dialysis take care of homes and families, finish school, work, travel, and even play sports.

Learn all you can about kidney disease and treatment. Know your options to help avoid feeling trapped. Learn how to do as much of your dialysis as you can. Being an active partner in your care can help you feel in control and stay healthy so you can reach your goals.

What *I* can do to feel better if I think I’m depressed:

- Be honest about my symptoms and ask for help if I need it.
- Take all the medicines my doctor orders, including ones for depression.
- Get every minute of my dialysis treatments so I can feel my best physically.

Q: What is *depression* and how do I get help for it?

- ❑ Ask my care team to help me find and talk to people who are having good lives with kidney failure.
- ❑ Ask my social worker about support groups in my area.
- ❑ Learn all I can and be an active partner in my treatment.
- ❑ Get *Just the Facts: Depression* from Life Options www.lifeoptions.org.
- ❑ Visit module 5 of Kidney School™: *Coping with Kidney Disease* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more about what I can do to cope with kidney disease.