

# My Treatment: What is Depression?

Dialysis changes your life! Not only are you dealing with how your body feels, but you must also cope with a new routine. For many people, it can affect your family, your work, and how you see yourself. With such a big life event, it is normal to feel sad, hurt or angry. If the feelings of sadness get worse, you may need to get help for depression. Studies have shown that depression is the most common mental health concern for nearly 25 percent of people on dialysis. However, many of the common signs of depression are also common signs of your kidneys not working. This can lead people to think it is just part of having kidney disease. Depression is not normal and there are things that can be done to help.



## What is Depression?

Depression is a common but serious medical illness. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in things someone used to enjoy. It affects how someone feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. In order to be diagnosed with depression the symptoms must be present for at least two weeks.

## Signs of Depression

Depression affects everyone differently. Depression can look different for men and women. Sometimes depression may not be noticed because many of the signs of depression are also things that happen as a natural result of dialysis. The list below also notes indicators that are a natural result for those who require dialysis.



Feeling sad or having an unhappy mood



Loss of interest or desire to do things you once enjoyed\*



Changes in desire for food - weight loss or gain not due to dieting \*



Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much\*



Loss of energy or feeling more tired\*



Feeling restless or really slowed down\*



Feeling worthless or guilty



Trouble thinking, focusing, or making decisions



Thoughts of death or suicide

## Depression Is Different From Sadness or Grief

The death of a loved one, loss of a job, or a major change in your health is hard to go through. It is normal for someone to have feelings of sadness or grief when these things happen. People who have had a loss might say they are “depressed.” Being sad is not the same as having depression. The grieving process is natural and shares some of the same signs as depression. Both grief and depression can include deep sadness and withdrawal from usual activities. But with grief, feelings often come in waves and are mixed with good memories. How someone feels about themselves usually stays the same. With depression people may feel worthless or sad and feel a lack of interest almost all the time for at least two weeks. For some people, loss can bring on depression.



## How is Depression Treated?

There is hope for people with depression. There are treatments that can help. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more likely it will work. At the dialysis clinic, the social worker may ask you a few questions that can help detect some of the signs of depression. Depression is usually treated with medications and/or psychotherapy (“talk therapy”). Your kidney doctor may ask that you see your primary care doctor or a psychiatrist for medications. The social worker can help you find therapy services that are available. Finally, there are many things people can do to help them cope with depression. For ideas on how to cope, see the “[My Life: Coping With Dialysis](#)” page.

If at any point you feel so overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and hopelessness, you should talk with someone you trust such as a social worker or your doctor. To find help in your area contact [The Hopeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255.

## My Questions | Ask Your Care Team:

1. I have some symptoms that are listed, what can I do?
2. Where can I get some more help?
3. Is there a support group available?

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