



Myths vs. Facts

About Depression

MYTH: *Depression doesn't affect me.*

FACT: About 14.5 million adults in the United States had at least one major depressive event in 2021.* This means that someone you care about (or maybe yourself) could deal with depression at some point in life. Depression happens a lot in patients with kidney disease. Some studies say it affects 22% to 39% of people on dialysis.**

MYTH: *Depression is not a real medical problem.*

FACT: Depression is a real and harmful illness. It can affect someone's life as much as diabetes or heart disease can. Depression can make life very hard for those who are dealing with it, affecting both their mind and body.

MYTH: *Depression only happens when something bad happens in your life.*

FACT: Depression is more than just having sad thoughts every once in a while. Everyone has ups and downs in life, and may feel sad for some time after a serious loss or an unwanted change, like finding out you have kidney disease, but something bad does not have to happen for someone to have depression. Signs of depression include long periods of having no hope, feeling sad, and having no interest in things someone usually enjoys. Depression can start out of the blue, even when things in life seem to be going well.

MYTH: *Depression is something that strong people can "snap out of" if they would be more positive.*

FACT: No one chooses to be depressed, just like no one chooses to have any other illness. People with depression cannot just "snap out of" their depression any more than someone with diabetes or kidney disease can. It is not a sign that someone is weak or lazy; it is a real health problem.

MYTH: *Feeling depressed is a normal part of having kidney disease.*

FACT: Depression can be helped even when the person has another illness. It is common to feel sad when you are trying to cope with health problems in your life. You may be dealing with new limits on what you can do and feel worried about your health and the future. It may be hard to get used to a new way of life and to cope with the changes and ongoing care that comes with kidney disease. Brief feelings of sadness are normal, but if it lasts longer than a couple of weeks, you may have depression. Depression affects how you usually carry on with daily life and how you enjoy work, leisure, friends, and family.

MYTH: *Depression will just go away on its own.*

FACT: For some people, depression may go away without medical care, but not usually. Without care, the signs of depression can go on for weeks, months or even years. Because depression can lead to suicide, it is very important to get help.

MYTH: *Antidepressants will change your personality.*

FACT: The thought of taking a pill that changes how your brain works can be scary. The job of antidepressants is to change only some chemicals that can cause depression, not to change you as a person. Most people who take antidepressants say they feel like themselves again, not that they feel like a different person. It is best to speak with your doctor about any questions you have.

MYTH: *Talking about depression only makes it worse.*

FACT: It is easy to understand why someone may worry about talking about their depression, but being alone with your thoughts is even more harmful when dealing with depression. The best thing you can do to help a friend if they choose to talk to you is to not judge them, and be a good and caring listener. If you are worried about talking about how you are feeling with close family members or a friend, talk with a member of your faith based community. A social worker can also listen and help you get the care you need.

If you are having suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline by dialing 988. To find help in your area, visit The HopeLine at <https://www.thehopeline.com>

Source: * <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26860073/>

** King-Wing Ma T, Kam-Tao Li P. Depression in dialysis patients. Nephrology (Carlton). 2016 Aug;21(8):639-46. doi: 10.1111/nep.12742. PMID: 26860073.

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