



# How to Manage Depression

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## This guide will help you understand:

- What is depression?
- What causes depression?
- What are the symptoms of depression?
- What can I do to help my depression?
- When should I talk to my healthcare team?
- Where can I get more information?

This guide is written for people living with kidney disease and those who help care for them. It does not replace advice from your healthcare team (for example, your nephrologist, nurses, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, and family doctor).

### What is Depression?

- Depression involves feeling sad, down, or depressed most of the day, nearly every day, for weeks or months. It may also involve losing interest or enjoyment in things you would normally enjoy. Some people experience both problems: low mood and loss of interest, while others might experience just one or the other.
- If these problems do not go away or get in the way of your everyday life, it might be a sign that you are depressed. You may need help or treatment to get better.
- Depression can lead to other physical and emotional health problems
- Depression is complicated – a person who is depressed cannot just “snap out of it” or “cheer up”

About 1 out of every 3 people getting dialysis treatments have some level of depression.

## What Causes Depression?

It is common for people living with kidney disease to feel some level of sadness, depression, or distress, wherever they are on their kidney journey.

Many things related to kidney disease can contribute to depression. These include:

- Worries about your health and how it will change
- Symptoms of kidney disease and other health problems
- Side-effects of treatments, including medications or dialysis treatments
- The impact of kidney disease on your life and relationships
- Lack of control over your health
- Feeling isolated or alone
- Other mental health or addiction issues

## What Are the Symptoms of Depression?

Symptoms of depression can show up in different parts of your life. This includes:

- Emotional/Mental Symptoms
  - Feeling hopeless or worthless
  - Not enjoying things you used to enjoy
  - Feelings of guilt or regret
  - Increased anger and irritability (yelling, shouting, lashing out at others)
  - Trouble thinking clearly, concentrating, or remembering
  - Crying a lot/crying for no reason
  - Avoiding family and friends
  - Desire to stop, miss, or change treatments
  - Feelings of not wanting to live or wanting to die
- Physical Symptoms
  - Low energy
  - Feeling sluggish or restless and agitated
  - Changes in eating habits or rapid weight change
  - Changes in self-care routine
  - Sleeping a lot more than normal or not able to sleep
  - Sexual problems

## What Can I Do to Help Manage Depression?

There are a number of things you can do that may help with depression. If these strategies do not make a difference, consider seeking professional help. Many treatments are available for depression including talk therapy and medications.

### **FIND SUPPORT**

- Support from family, friends, and your community can comfort you and help you feel less scared and alone
- Places to find support:
  - Talk to someone you trust and who is a good listener (for example, a friend or family member)
  - Talk to your family doctor or a member of your healthcare team
  - Talk to someone at a place of worship – spiritual or religious advice may help you feel better
  - Join a kidney disease peer support program to share your experience and stories with other people – many hospitals and The Kidney Foundation of Canada ([www.kidney.ca](http://www.kidney.ca)) offer peer support programs where you can connect with others who can share their experiences
  - Seek counselling by talking to a social worker or other mental healthcare professional either at your local kidney care centre or in your community
- Learn more about kidney disease
  - People who learn about kidney disease and treatment options often feel more in control
  - Be ready for your appointments with a list of questions and bring a support person if you can – it can be helpful to take notes during your visit to remember the things that are important to you

### **FOCUS ON THINGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER**

- Focus on:
  - The positive parts of your life that you are grateful for
  - Things that you can control
- Spend time with people who make you laugh

- Do activities that you enjoy and that help you relax (such as music, nature, and art)

## **EXERCISE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY AND MIND**

- Exercise or being active is a good way to improve your mood
- Choose an activity that you are comfortable with and is right for your health and fitness level
- Start slowly with light exercise, such as walking, swimming, or yoga
  - There are also many exercises that can be done while seated
- Go at your own pace – slowly increase the amount and difficulty of your activities
- Exercise may also:
  - Give you more energy
  - Help you manage pain
  - Improve your appetite
  - Help you sleep better
  - Build stronger muscles
  - Improve your mood
- If you are already active, talk to your healthcare team about your activities and make a plan to keep doing them

### **Be Safe!**

- Stop and rest if you feel sore, stiff, or out of breath
- Always talk to your healthcare team about how to exercise safely

## **IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP**

- Getting good sleep can give you more energy and help you feel better emotionally
- Go to [www.ontariorenalnetwork.ca](http://www.ontariorenalnetwork.ca) and read the Ontario Renal Network's Sleep Problems Symptom Self-Management Guide for more tips that may help you improve your sleep

## **MAKE LISTS OF CALMING, ENJOYABLE AND USEFUL ACTIVITIES**

- When you feel sad or down, choose an activity from your list to try
- Examples of activities that some people find help their mood include:

- Activities you enjoy, such as going for a walk, watching your favourite TV shows, or taking a bath or shower
- Things you can do during dialysis treatments, such as listening to music, reading, and knitting
- Put the chores you are able to do into a daily or weekly schedule – getting them done may help you feel in control and improve your mood

## **GET COUNSELLING TO HELP YOU COPE**

- Living with kidney disease can be difficult at times and many people may feel depressed because of their symptoms. There are ways to support you and help you feel better
- With professional counselling, you can learn different ways of thinking and behaving to help you cope
- Your healthcare team can help you connect with a:
  - Social Worker
  - Psychiatrist
  - Psychologist
  - Psychotherapist
- If you are experiencing depression or low mood, the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) program offers free Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to people in Ontario. The OSP program might be able to help you take care of your mental health, and help you manage low mood and worry in a way that meets your needs and preferences. For more information about the OSP program, speak to your kidney care team or go to: [www.ontariohealth.ca/getting-health-care/mental-health-addictions/depression-anxiety-ontario-structured-psychotherapy](http://www.ontariohealth.ca/getting-health-care/mental-health-addictions/depression-anxiety-ontario-structured-psychotherapy)

## **When Should I Talk to My Healthcare Team?**

Your healthcare team wants to know if you feel depressed, sad, or worried. Your concerns and questions are important and can be safely shared with your healthcare team. If your feelings of depression do not get better, medication may help to control it. You can discuss medication options with your healthcare team.

If you are thinking about hurting yourself, ending your own life or have tried to end your own life, tell your healthcare team right away, go to your nearest emergency room, call 911, or call the Suicide Crisis Helpline at 988.



## Resources To Get More Information

### Mental Health Websites:

- Canadian Mental Health Association ([www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca))
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health ([www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca))
- Anxiety Canada ([www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com))

### Suicide Prevention & Crisis:

- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention ([www.suicideprevention.ca/need-help](http://www.suicideprevention.ca/need-help))
- Crisis Services Canada ([www.crisisservicescanada.ca](http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca))
- Distress and Crisis Ontario ([www.dcontario.org](http://www.dcontario.org))
- The Lifeline Canada Foundation ([www.thelifelinecanada.ca](http://www.thelifelinecanada.ca))

### Mood disorders:

- Mood Disorders Association of Canada ([www.mooddisorders.ca](http://www.mooddisorders.ca))

### Sleep:

- Canadian Sleep Society ([www.css-scs.ca](http://www.css-scs.ca))
- National Sleep Foundation ([www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org))

### Mindfulness:

- Mindful Awareness Stabilization Training (MAST) program ([www.unityhealth.to/mast-program/](http://www.unityhealth.to/mast-program/))

### Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):

- Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) program ([www.ontariohealth.ca/getting-health-care/mental-health-addictions/depression-anxiety-ontario-structured-psychotherapy](http://www.ontariohealth.ca/getting-health-care/mental-health-addictions/depression-anxiety-ontario-structured-psychotherapy))

## Where to get more information

For more information on this symptom, or for guides to help manage other symptoms, please visit [ontariorenalnetwork.ca/en/kidney-care-resources/clinical-tools/symptom-management/managing-your-symptoms](https://ontariorenalnetwork.ca/en/kidney-care-resources/clinical-tools/symptom-management/managing-your-symptoms)

The recommendations in this guide are based on published evidence and expert consensus.

Ontario Health (Ontario Renal Network) gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide. This document is designed to provide people living with kidney disease with information about depression. It is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional, nor is it intended to provide a comprehensive list of treatment options. As treatment options and standards are constantly evolving, we do not guarantee that the information in this document is current. Always speak with your healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

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### **Need this information in an accessible format?**

1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, [info@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:info@ontariohealth.ca)

Document disponible en français en contactant [info@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:info@ontariohealth.ca)

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