



### **What is depression?**

Depression is a state of mind where none of the things that used to make you happy work any more. It is sometimes called “the blues” or being “down in the dumps.” Depression is very common after some of life’s most cruel events, such as death, divorce—or learning you have kidney failure. Experts say one of every three or four dialysis patients is depressed.

Depression is *not* just a rare day of sadness. Feeling hopeless and helpless for a few weeks is a clue that you might be depressed. Sleeping or eating more or less than usual—or missing dialysis—can also be clues.

The good news is that depression can sometimes be prevented, and can always be treated.

### **Why is depression important to me?**

Depression can take the joy out of life. It can steal your energy and make you feel like there is no hope, or no reason to go on living. If you are depressed, getting dressed and out of the house can feel like climbing a mountain. Being depressed can also make your health worse.

If you are depressed, it can be hard to believe that life can get better again—but it *can*. Getting help for depression can give you your life back.

### **What can I do if I feel sad or afraid?**

When you learn that your kidneys no longer work, it is normal to feel angry, fearful, and sad. Your doctor or nurse can answer

medical questions, and a social worker at your unit can help you during this hard time.

You have a lot to learn, and many changes to fit into your life. Write down your questions, so you can get them answered and reduce your worrying. You will have ups and downs as you adjust to kidney failure. This is normal.

After you get used to your new life and get answers to your questions, you should start to feel better. Even though your dialysis schedule and new eating plan may be hard to get used to, they should start to feel like a normal part of who you are and what you do each day.



### **What can I do if I am depressed?**

Try the tips listed on the other side of this page every day for a few weeks. They have helped many people feel better. If they do not help you at all, or if you feel like you want to die, tell your doctor and/or social worker. There are many types of medication that can help you feel better.

## How can I fight depression?

Problem	How can I prevent it?	What should I ask?
I just want to pull the covers over my head and sleep all day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make plans for the day that you will look forward to.</li> <li>• Try to keep busy.</li> <li>• Surround yourself with sights, sounds, and smells that give you happiness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a support group meeting I could go to?</li> <li>• Are there classes nearby that I could take?</li> <li>• Where could I volunteer to help someone else?</li> </ul>
I have no energy. I'm restless, and have the blahs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start exercising, even a little.</li> <li>• Move around to upbeat music that you really like.</li> <li>• Spend at least 10 minutes every day outside in the fresh air. Walk if you can or sit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a beginning exercise group I can join?</li> <li>• Is there anyone I can walk outside with?</li> </ul>
I feel like I got a bad deal in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List what you are grateful for. Look at your list each day and add to it.</li> <li>• Try to see the beauty and goodness in the world around you. Write it down.</li> <li>• Have an attitude of gratitude.</li> <li>• Reach out past yourself to help someone else.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the people who have been good to me?</li> <li>• Who are the people I have been good to?</li> <li>• Are there memories I treasure?</li> </ul>
I can't go on like this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to your family and friends for support.</li> <li>• Talk to your social worker or religious counselor.</li> <li>• Seek professional help—ask for a referral to a counselor.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor about depression medications that can be used by people with kidney failure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you recommend a therapist for me to talk to?</li> <li>• Can you prescribe an antidepressant that will be safe for me to take?</li> </ul>

## Where can I find more information on depression?

- Visit Kidney School™ Module 5: *Coping with Kidney Disease* at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org).



**Life Options Rehabilitation Program**  
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