

Constipation

Constipation is common in people with kidney failure. Constipation is described as difficult, hard, incomplete or irregular emptying of the bowels. Constipation can be different for each individual. Constipation can be caused by restricting the fluids you drink, some medications, a diet low in fibre, stress and or too little exercise.

Constipation can become a serious problem. Constipation can lead to a bowel obstruction, where stool has blocked a portion of your bowel. If you are experiencing constipation along with: nausea, vomiting, a swollen abdomen and/or abdominal cramping or pain, speak to your health care provider as soon as you can.

What are some tips to help me prevent constipation?

These tips may help you prevent or treat constipation.

- Increase your physical activity to help get your bowels moving (if it's safe for you).
- Make sure you are drinking as much fluid as your doctor or dietician have told you to drink.
- Eat regular meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Try to train your bowels by using the bathroom when you wake up and after meals. Do not ignore the impulse to have a bowel movement.
- Fibre will help prevent constipation. Increasing your fibre intake will help your digestive system healthy and prevents constipation by making stools soft and bulky. Speak to your care provider before increasing the amount of fibre you eat in your diet.
 - Increase your fibre intake slowly. Too much fibre too quickly can cause constipation.
 - Do not have your fibre intake all in one meal; spread your intake of fibre throughout the day.
- Speak to your dietitian about the right fruit and vegetable choices for you if you need a potassium restricted-diet

- Fruits with the most fibre are pears, apples, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, strawberries, cherries and grapes.
- Vegetables with the most fibre are green peas, turnips, corn, carrots (boiled), cabbage, green or yellow beans, broccoli (raw) and cauliflower.
- Try adding a small amount of prunes to your diet. Have no more than 3 dried or canned prunes per day and no more than ¼ cup (60mL) of prune juice per day.

What are some treatment options?

Speak with your care provider if constipation is a problem for you. Your care provider may speak to you about medicines you can take to help you have a bowel movement regularly. Talk to your care provider before taking over-the-counter constipation medicine (laxatives) or a fibre supplement like inulin powder



Dealing with Depression

Introduction

Depression can affect anyone, regardless of their age, gender, economic status, cultural background or general health. It is fairly common for people with kidney disease, whether they're on dialysis or not, to experience depression. It can affect their family members, caregivers and support providers. A person who is depressed has no need to feel ashamed, embarrassed or weak. The important thing to remember is that **depression can be effectively treated**. This Fact Sheet will help you learn more about how to manage depression and to get treatment.

What is depression?

Depression is a state of mind where the things that used to make you happy don't work anymore. It is common to experience some depression after some of life's most difficult events, such as death, divorce—or learning you have kidney failure. Experts say that one out of every three or four people on dialysis can experience depression.

Depression is not just a rare day of sadness. Feeling hopeless and helpless for a few weeks or longer could be a sign. Sleeping or eating more or less than usual—or missing dialysis or other important appointments—can also be clues. Crying a lot, having little energy, feeling worthless, weight changes, and not wanting to live are other signs of depression. Because it is so common and depression can have a very negative effect on quality of life, it's a good idea to speak to someone on your healthcare team if these feelings continue for some time.

Why is knowing about 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. Feeling this way can also make your health get worse.

It can be hard to believe that life can get better again—**but it can**. Learning more about depression, and getting help will make you feel better.

What can I do if I feel sad or afraid?

When you learn that your kidneys no longer work or that a loved one has kidney disease, it is normal to feel afraid, confused, sad, and sometimes angry. One of the most helpful things you can do about these feelings is to talk about them. Feelings are real and need to be shared. You may have been taught that it is “weak” to talk about personal problems or even cry, but sometimes that is exactly what you need to do. It is not helpful to hold stress, anxiety, sadness and fear inside because doing so can lead to more health problems.

There are many people you can talk to. Your doctor or nurse can answer medical questions, and a social worker can provide support, as well as information about other resources available to help you. Talking to family members and other patients can be a good source of support and inspiration. Many hospitals and all branches of The Kidney Foundation of Canada offer peer

support programs where you can get in touch with others who can share their experiences. The Kidney Foundation's patient manual, *Living with Kidney Disease (Chapter 6)*, provides more information on depression, as well as tips for families and friends.

I have so many questions!

You have a lot of new things to learn and many changes to fit into your life. Write down your questions and concerns so you can get them answered and reduce your worrying. It is common to have ups and downs as you adjust to how kidney disease affects you and those you care about.

After you get used to your new life changes and get answers to your questions, you will likely start to feel better. At first, it may be hard for you (and those around you) to get used to learning a new eating plan, attending additional medical appointments and following your dialysis schedule. However, after awhile these activities should start to feel like a regular part of everyday life.

What can I do if I am feeling depressed?

Try the suggestions listed below 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 give up, ask your healthcare team for help right away. Depression can be effectively treated and there are many ways to help you feel better.

Some people find it helpful to talk to someone with kidney disease, join a support group, or to get more information about their health issues. Some people benefit from counselling and/or medications to help them through this difficult time. You may also have ideas on what may help you, so talk to others about your needs. Whether you are a person living with kidney disease, or you are supporting someone who is, there are services available to help you manage and cope better.

Some ideas to manage depression

Challenge	What can I do?
I just want to pull the covers over my head and sleep all day.	<p>Become aware of how you are feeling and thinking.</p> <p>Make a plan for the day.</p> <p>Try to keep busy with your daily activities and take rest breaks when you are tired.</p> <p>Do things you enjoy in your life.</p>
<p>I have no energy.</p> <p>I'm restless and feel out of sorts.</p>	<p>Start exercising, even a little.</p> <p>Spend at least 15 minutes every day outside in the fresh air, go for outings or walks if you can, or even just sitting outside can be refreshing.</p> <p>Decide which activities are really important to do and give yourself plenty of time to do them.</p> <p>Find out from your healthcare team if your blood tests, medications and eating plan are okay, or if you need to make changes.</p>

Challenge	What can I do?
I feel that life is very hard for me.	<p>Think about what is making life hard for you.</p> <p>You could write down these thoughts and ideas.</p> <p>Think about what steps you could take to make things better.</p> <p>Ask for help from others.</p> <p>Have a positive attitude.</p> <p>Try to focus on what you are able to do instead of what you cannot do.</p>
I can't go on like this.	<p>Reach out to your family and friends for support.</p> <p>Talk to your social worker or religious counsellor.</p> <p>Seek professional help—ask for a referral to a counsellor or psychiatrist.</p> <p>Ask your doctor about depression medications that can be used by people with kidney failure.</p> <p>Have patience – You may need to try several different medications and strategies to find what works best for you.</p>
If things do not improve	
<p>Speak to a member of your healthcare team to learn more about the help and services that may be available to you.</p> <p>Some questions you may want to ask include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can you help me if I am feeling sad or depressed? ■ What type of treatment is available? ■ What has helped others? ■ What should I do if I don't feel like living? ■ What if I need help when no one else is around? ■ How can I get help for my loved ones? 	

For further information, or if you wish to help us in our efforts, please contact The Kidney Foundation of Canada office in your area. You can also visit our Web site at www.kidney.ca.

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Itch is common in kidney failure. Only one area may itch or you might feel itchy all over. It can also be caused by skin sensitivities and allergies. Scratching can cause breaks in the skin, bleeding, and infection. Tell your care provider if you're having a problem with itching.

What tips can I try?

Home

- Keep your home cool and humid, especially in the winter.
- Use mild detergents and make sure clothing and bedding are rinsed well.
- Wear loose, lightweight cotton clothing and use cotton bed sheets.

Personal Care

- Bathe for at least 15 minutes every day in lukewarm water. Baths are preferred to showers.
- Soaps and body washes can irritate your skin. Use gentle cleansers instead (such as CeraVe® or Cetaphil®) and use them only on the parts of your body that really need cleaning (such as sweaty areas like armpits and groin). Otherwise, just use water to wash.
- Gently pat your skin to dry. **Moisturize within 2 minutes of getting out.** Your skin should still be damp. Use hypoallergenic moisturizers with ceramides (such as CeraVe®) that have no scents or other additives. Do not use the cream on areas of broken skin.
- Avoid scratching – keep fingernails short, try massaging your skin rather than scratching, try wearing gloves at night.

What treatment choices do I have?

Talk to your care provider if you're having trouble managing the itching. There are medicated creams and medicine that can help. Some over-the-counter creams or lotions, such as Gold Bond® anti-itch products might help.

Don't take over-the-counter medicine (for example, antihistamines) for your itch.

Ask your care provider about treatment options such as phototherapy or acupuncture.

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting can be an upsetting symptom of kidney failure. You can still throw up (vomit) even if you don't feel sick to your stomach (nausea). There can be many reasons for nausea and/or vomiting, such as certain medicines, being constipated, and toxins building up in your body because of your kidney failure.

What tips can I try at home?

Depending on the cause, there are some things you can try at home.

- Try to prevent or manage constipation.
 - Slowly increase the amount of fibre in your diet over a few days. Spread fibre intake over the day instead of in one meal.
 - Eat regular meals and snacks through the day to keep food moving through the bowel.
 - Drink adequate fluid.
 - Be as active as possible to help the bowels move
 - If you still have trouble, speak with your care provider about a referral to a dietitian and about medications you can take for constipation.
- Eat smaller amounts of food more often, and adjust the time you eat. For example, if you often feel sick to your stomach in the early morning, try eating breakfast a little later.
- Eat slowly.
- Drink fluids 30 to 60 minutes before or after meals, instead of with meals.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Stay away from foods that are greasy, spicy, or very sweet.
- Keep the air fresh—stay away from cooking smells, scents like perfume, or smoke.

- Keep your mouth fresh. For example, brush your teeth, or use a non-alcohol mouthwash or club soda to rinse your mouth.
- Stay upright for about 1 hour after eating, as this can help with digestion.
- If you're feeling sick to your stomach, put a cool damp cloth on your forehead or the back of your neck.
- Wear loose fitting clothing.
- Think about using ginger and other therapies such as relaxation, imagery, acupressure, or acupuncture.

What treatment choices do I have?

Speak with your care provider if your nausea or vomiting is hard to manage. There is medicine you can take. Talk to your care provider before trying over-the-counter medicine.

When vomiting lasts for a long time, you can get dehydrated. Be sure to tell your care provider about your nausea or vomiting.

Pain is usually due to a health issue that's hard to treat or can't be cured. When not treated, it can take over your life, making you feel depressed, anxious, and/or angry. It can also affect your sleep, relationships, activity level, and how you enjoy life. Although it may not always be possible to relieve all your pain, the goal is to get your pain down to an acceptable level where you still enjoy life.

Managing pain works best when you play an active role. It usually includes a combination of treatments, such as physiotherapy, exercise, and medicine. You may have to try a few treatments before you find the one that works the best for you. Learning to relax and to change negative thinking can help you cope with pain. It's important to stay in touch with your care provider to make sure your pain is being managed.

What tips can I try at home?

- **Pace yourself.** Break larger jobs into small jobs or save the harder jobs for when you have less pain. Rest often during the activity.
- **Keep moving.** Every day, do gentle exercises like walking, swimming, riding the stationary bike and stretching (if it's safe for you).
- **Relaxation techniques.** Ask if someone on your healthcare team can help you get started. You can also learn some of these on your own. Some techniques include:
 - Deep breathing exercises: Slow your breathing to the point where you are as relaxed in your breathing as possible. Breaths should be deep and fill your lungs.
 - Meditation: Sit or lie in a comfortable position for 20 minutes. Be aware of your breathing, your sensations (including your pain), your thoughts, and feelings.
 - Guided Imagery: Form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.
 - Yoga: Can relax your breathing, ease muscle tension, and energize your mind and body.
 - Massage: Helps reduce tension and pain.

- **Think positively.** Positive thinking can ease pain.
- **Do an activity or hobby** you enjoy.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** Pain may make you tired. Pain may be worse if you don't get enough sleep. Talk to your doctor if pain is causing sleep problems.
- **Keep a pain diary.** Keep a record of your pain levels throughout the day and how your pain affects your mood, activities, sleep. Sharing your diary with your care provider can help your provider decide the best way to manage your pain.

What treatment choices do I have?

Your care provider may suggest treatment options such as physiotherapy, acupuncture, acupressure, or TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation).

If you take pain medicine, let your care provider know how it's working for you or if you're having side effects (such as constipation or drowsiness). Take your pain medicine as prescribed so that your pain doesn't get out of control.

Talk to your care provider before taking over-the-counter medicine.

Restless Legs

Restless legs can range from being mildly annoying to being almost disabling. It can interfere with your sleep and your day to day living. Restless legs cause an urge to move your legs when you're at rest. You may also have an uncomfortable feeling in your legs.

It's often worse in the evening or at night, which can make it hard for you to fall or stay asleep. You might notice that moving your legs makes them feel better.

Let your care provider know if you have restless legs, especially if it's affecting your everyday activities or your sleep.

What tips I can try at home?

- Stop or cut down stimulants such as alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine to see if your symptoms go away. Don't use them in the evening before bedtime.
- Try to keep yourself mentally busy. For example, do word or number activities like crossword puzzles or Sudoku, needlework, or video games.
- Try aerobic exercise, walking, and/or stretching (if it's safe for you).
- A gentle leg massage sometimes helps.
- Good sleep hygiene may help:
 - Wake up at the same time every morning.
 - Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy. Don't "try" to fall asleep.
 - Try not to nap during the day.
 - Use your bedroom for sleep (and sex) only.
- Learn relaxation techniques. Ask if someone on your healthcare team can help you get started. You can also learn some on your own. Some techniques include:
 - Progressive muscle relaxation (focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group)
 - Visualization (form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation)
 - Deep breathing

- Music and art therapy

What treatment choices do I have?

Speak with your care provider if restless legs are a problem for you. Your care provider may talk about treatment options such as medicine, acupuncture, or acupressure.

If you are taking medicine for your restless legs, take it **exactly** as prescribed - don't wait for your restless legs to get really bad.

Feeling Short of Breath

Feeling short of breath or like you can't breathe is a possible symptom of kidney failure and can be upsetting. There can be many causes: low iron levels, extra fluid in the lungs, and even being anxious. Remember that you know best how your breathing feels—you may not *look* like you're short of breath, but that doesn't mean that you don't *feel* short of breath.

What tips can I try at home?

- Sit more upright. Using pillows to support your back may help.
- Sit near an open window.
- Sleep more upright. Sleeping in a recliner may help.
- Have a fan blow gently across your face.
- Keep the air humidified.
- Try "pursed lip" breathing—ask your care provider to show you. If it doesn't feel natural or it doesn't help, don't do it.
- Wear loose clothing, especially around your neck.
- If you take medicine for your breathing, try taking it before doing an activity that makes you feel short of breath.
- Rest often between activities that make you feel short of breath (for example, walking, washing, dressing, or talking).
- Keep surroundings as calm as possible—especially if you're feeling anxious.
- Try meditation, mindfulness, or relaxation therapy.

What are some relaxation techniques?

Some of your healthcare providers may be able to teach you relaxation techniques or you can learn some on your own. Some techniques include:

- progressive muscle relaxation (focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group)
- visualization (form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation)
- music and art therapy

What treatment choices do I have?

Following a low-salt diet may help your breathing, because salt affects the amount of fluid in your body. Too much fluid in your body can lead to shortness of breath. If you need more help with this, or ways to limit your fluid intake, you could ask to speak with a dietitian.

Talk to your care provider if shortness of breath is still a problem for you. You may need medicine, including oxygen.

Sometimes when you're very short of breath, it can feel like an emergency. Plan ahead and have a list of who you can phone and what medicine (including oxygen) you can take to help your breathing.

If you have homecare, they may be able to help you with your shortness of breath at home. Be sure that you or your family always let the nurse, doctor or healthcare team know if you are feeling short of breath or if your symptoms are getting worse.



Swelling

Swelling is common in kidney failure. Swelling happens when there's extra fluid in your body and your body isn't balancing the fluid. You may notice you're gaining weight, have swelling in your feet and lower legs or in other places like your fingers, around your eyes, and your lower back. Shortness of breath can also be a sign that fluid is building up in your chest or lungs. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any swelling or shortness of breath. There's medicine you can take to manage this. Some changes to your diet and fluid intake might also help.

At Home

- When you're sitting, elevate your swollen feet/legs on a stool to help blood flow back to your heart.
- Wear compression stockings if your doctor says you can.
- Remember to walk. This helps move fluid from your lower legs up to the rest of your body.

Diet

- Don't add salt to food—use herbs, spices and salt-free seasoning instead.
- **Don't** eat canned, packaged, frozen, and bottled foods with more than 200 mg sodium per serving. Look for foods that have a 5% or lower daily value for sodium. Try to limit choosing foods that have a 15% or higher daily value for sodium. You can find this information on nutrition facts labels. Common high-salt foods are canned soup, potato chips, hot dogs, deli meats, and sausage.
- You may need to limit your fluid to help keep your fluids in balance. Cutting back on salt and dialyzing regularly can also help keep your fluids in balance. If you have been told to watch your fluid intake by your doctor or dietitian, it is best to drink only 2 to 4 cups (500 to 1000 mL) of fluid plus the amount of urine your kidneys make each day.

- Think about eating kidney-friendly frozen meal options from Meals on Wheels™. Ask your healthcare provider about this or and other services for meals.

What else can I do?

- Know your blood pressure. It can go up with extra fluid in your body.
- If prescribed by your doctor, make sure to take your water pills (diuretics like Lasix®).
- Weigh yourself every day and keep track to see if your weight changes.



Tiredness

It's common to feel tired when you have kidney failure. Even if you rest or get lots of sleep, you can still feel exhausted and have no energy. Fatigue can have many causes, including low iron or vitamin D, and a build-up of toxins in your body caused by your kidney failure. There's no easy way to deal with fatigue. Instead, you may want to try different ways to try to improve or save your energy—you may need to be a bit creative in how you go about your day.

What are some tips to improve my energy?

- Exercise can help (speak with your care provider).
- Ask your care provider about an eating plan that's best for you. You can ask for a referral to a dietitian.
- Ask your healthcare team how you can get started with using relaxation therapy or stress management techniques.
- Treatments, such as acupressure or acupuncture, may help.

What are some tips to conserve my energy?

Daily Living

- Sit down to bathe.
- Wear a terry bathrobe to dry off.
- Install bars in places where you might need extra support while moving around (for example, in the kitchen, bedroom, or laundry room).
- Place chairs around your home so you can stop and rest (for example, at the top and bottom of the stairs).
- Home Care may be able to assist you in getting equipment in the house to make life easier (for example, a walker, cane, commode, or urinal).
- Try to rest before you get too tired.

Housekeeping

- Spread tasks over the week.
- Do housework sitting down if possible (for example, sit down to iron).
- Ask someone to help you with shopping and laundry.
- Drag or slide heavy items instead of lifting them.
- Keep a small trash can in each room.

Shopping

- Organize your list by aisle.
- Use a grocery cart for support.
- Shop at less busy times.
- Ask for help bringing your groceries to the car.

Preparing Meals

- Prepare meals sitting down.
- Soak dishes instead of scrubbing and let dishes air dry.
- Make double portions and freeze half.
- Keep items you use often near you and in easy reach (for example, keep a plate, cup, and cutlery on the counter)

Adapted from:

- *99 Questions (and more) about Hospice Palliative Care, Appendix E*
- www.kidney.org/transplantation/transaction/TC/fall14/11-tips-save-energy-changing-your-daily-routines

