

# Depression and chronic kidney disease

## What is depression?

We all have good days and bad days. Then there are those days when something isn't quite right, you've got something on your mind, or things just seem too much.

In Australia, around **1 in 2** people will struggle with their mental health during their lifetime.

We all feel sad, moody or low sometimes, it's a normal part of life. If these feelings come and stay for more than two weeks, it might be a sign that you have depression.

Depression affects **1 in 5** people with chronic kidney disease and between **25 - 50%** of people on dialysis. It's a serious condition that affects your physical and mental health.

It's important to know that depression is treatable and it's worth reaching out and talking to someone about it. Depression is more than just feeling sad – it's a serious illness.

Depression can affect **1 in 5** people with chronic kidney disease and up to **50%** of people on dialysis.



With depression, you might:

- Stop going out socially
- Avoid family and friends
- Rely on alcohol or sedatives to boost your mood
- Lose interest in activities that you used to enjoy
- Have trouble making decisions
- Always feel tired and lack energy.

**It's important to get support early if you're feeling unsettled or struggling.**

## Depression and chronic kidney disease (CKD)

Depression is very common in people with CKD and their families. Kidney disease and depression share many of the same symptoms.

These include fatigue, sleep problems, poor appetite, and difficulty concentrating. If you are experiencing these symptoms, it doesn't necessarily mean that you are depressed, but it's important to talk with your healthcare team to find out what is causing these symptoms. Feeling sad at times is normal, especially if you are coping with chronic illness.

Depression can happen anytime when you have kidney disease. It might start because you're surprised by the diagnosis, feel like you're losing control over your health, have to change your lifestyle, or spend a lot of time at medical appointments. It's important to talk to your healthcare team about it because there are treatments that can help.



### Could I have depression?

Everyone experiences depression differently.

Everyone feels depression differently.

#### Here are some common signs:

- Avoiding friends and family
- Trouble focusing
- Feeling very sad or empty
- Always feeling tired
- Not going out
- Not finishing tasks
- Using alcohol or sedatives.

#### Feelings:

- Overwhelmed or unsure
- Guilty
- Irritable or frustrated
- Lacking confidence
- Unhappy or disappointed.

#### Thoughts:

- "Nothing good ever happens to me"
- "I'm worthless"
- "Life's not worth living"
- "People would be better off without me".

#### Physical symptoms:

- Feeling tired all the time
- Headaches and muscle pains
- Stomach pain or butterflies
- Sleep problems
- Loss or change of appetite.



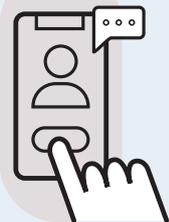
**If you notice these signs, talk to someone you trust or a healthcare professional.**

## Depression can be treated

Depression can be effectively treated in patients with CKD. There are a range of effective depression treatments. These include antidepressant medications, psychotherapies, or a combination of both. Psychological treatments can help you manage your mood, change negative patterns of thinking, and improve your coping skills.

### What works best will be different for each person.

Your health professional will work with you to find the treatment which works best for you. You may need to try a few different ones before you find which one's best for dealing with your depression.



## Where can I get help?

Your doctor is the best place to start for professional help. Your doctor can:

- Diagnose depression
- Check for any other health problems or medication that may be contributing to your symptoms
- Discuss possible treatments
- Provide brief counselling
- Refer you to a mental health specialist, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist.



## Where to go for immediate help?

When you are overwhelmed, call the **Beyond Blue** support line at **1300 224 636** or visit **beyondblue.org.au**.

OR call **Lifeline** at **13 11 14** or visit **lifeline.org.au**.



## Things to remember:

- ✓ Depression is common in people with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and their family and caregivers.
- ✓ It's OK to talk to someone about depression. It's common, and there are many treatments available.
- ✓ Depression can be **effectively treated** if you have CKD. Treatments can include medications and psychological therapies.

## What does that word mean?

**Antidepressant** – A medicine used to treat depression that is prescribed by doctors or psychiatrists.

**Psychiatrist** – A medically trained doctor who specialises in the study and treatment of mental health.

**Psychologist** – A health professional who is an expert in human behaviour. Many psychologists work directly with those experiencing difficulties, such as mental health disorders including anxiety and depression. A psychologist cannot prescribe medication.

**Sedative** – A substance or drug used for its relaxation, calming or sleep-inducing affect.



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 **Kidney Health**  
Australia

**Free Kidney Helpline 1800 454 363**  
[kidney.org.au](http://kidney.org.au)

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 or [relayservice.com.au](http://relayservice.com.au). Have them connect you to the Free Kidney Helpline - 1800 454 363 



**WANT TO  
LEARN MORE?**

Kidney Health 4 Life is a health and wellbeing program equipping people, and those that care for them, with the knowledge and resources to take more active management of their kidney health or kidney disease.



**Join Kidney Health 4 Life  
by scanning the QR code**

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or health professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.

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