

Coping with Kidney Disease

Learning that you have a kidney problem, like chronic kidney disease (CKD) or end-stage kidney disease (ESKD), can be stressful. Kidney disease may be hard to understand, and many people with kidney disease do not know they have it, so they may be surprised when they are diagnosed. Since there is no cure for kidney disease, you may have to learn to live with it for a long time. If you feel anxious or stressed about your kidney disease, talking with your doctors and your Healthmap Solutions (Healthmap) Care Navigation team member can help. It is important to make sure you are taking care of your physical and emotional well-being, as well as your kidney health.



Learning That You Have Kidney Disease

Having CKD or ESKD can mean different things for different people. Sometimes the disease can progress over time, but other times it can be stable.

Trying to learn about kidney disease on the internet on your own can lead to more stress and may not be helpful. Ask your nephrologist (kidney doctor) or your Care Navigation team member to help you find ways to learn about kidney disease.

Living with kidney disease is a journey. It may not always be easy, but many people can still live a long, healthy, and happy life with kidney disease.



Taking Care of Your Physical and Emotional Health

Managing kidney disease can be hard for some people. Many people with kidney disease also have diabetes, high blood pressure, or other problems, which need to be carefully managed.

You will likely have to take many medications. This can be stressful for some people. Pillboxes, calendars, apps on your phone, and reminders can all help you remember to take your medications.

Staying active is an important part of keeping your body and mind healthy. If it is hard for you to exercise, try to find something easy that you like to do to stay active. Daily walks, gentle exercise, and swimming can be helpful. Before you start an exercise program, talk to your doctor.

You may need to change your diet and stop eating certain kinds of food. Sometimes it is hard to find the right food to keep you healthy. Working with a dietitian and your doctors can be very helpful. Your Healthmap Care Navigation team member can introduce you to a dietitian to help you learn how to eat healthily and make a meal plan that works for you.

Asking For Help With Emotional Challenges

Depression is common for people with chronic diseases, including kidney disease. If you feel depressed, anxious, or sad, reach out to your doctor or Care Navigation team member for help. Know that you are not alone, and there are many people who can help you.

Sometimes, psychologic or psychiatric help might be needed. Both therapy and medications can help people with these problems. Ignoring these feelings is not the right way to deal with them. Ask your doctor if you want to learn more about therapy or medications to help with these feelings.

Talking with friends, family, and other patients with kidney disease can be very helpful. Your local community may have support groups where you can meet other patients. The National Kidney Foundation has a peer mentoring program which may be helpful if there is nothing similar in your area. Go to www.kidney.org/peers to learn more about this program.



How Will Kidney Disease Affect Your Life?

Many people want to know if their life will change after learning that they have kidney disease. Your doctors will likely ask you to change your diet and lifestyle as first steps. You may need to change your daily routines, but most people with kidney disease will be able to keep doing the things they love without many changes.

People who have ESKD or kidney failure may need to spend a lot of time on dialysis. Some people can still have a full-time job while on dialysis, but other people choose to work less. There are different types of dialysis that take different amounts of time, so you may be able to choose one that will work best for your schedule, including doing dialysis at home.

People with kidney disease may see changes in their ability to be intimate with partners due to their condition and medications. Talking openly with your doctor is the best step to work on solving this.

Taking care of your **physical and emotional health** is very important for those with kidney disease. If you have any issues or are worried about dealing with kidney disease, **talk to your doctor or your Healthmap Care Navigation team member.**



To learn more, call Healthmap at **1-800-481-0474** or visit patients.healthmapsolutions.com.