

Dialysis and Sleep Problems

What are common sleep problems for people on Dialysis?

People on dialysis may complain of any the following problems:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Trouble staying asleep
- Interrupted sleep
- Struggle to wake up

Why am I at Risk?

Studies show that up to 80% of dialysis patients have some form of sleep problems. Without treatment, sleep problems can lead to poor physical and mental functioning, lower quality of life, and increase death risk.

Why Might I Have Trouble Sleeping?

These may vary from person to person.

- Uremia -not getting enough dialysis.
- Daytime naps - sleeping during the day makes it harder to sleep at night.
- Restless Legs Syndrome- the uncomfortable, “jumpy” feeling in your legs.
- Depression - may cause you to sleep too much.
- Stress or anxiety - worries may keep you awake at night.
- Itching - may be the result of a high phosphorus level.
- Sleep Apnea- if you have difficulty breathing while sleeping you may need to be evaluated for sleep apnea.

What do I do if I have any of these symptoms?

Talk to your doctor and dialysis social worker if you are having trouble sleeping almost every night for more than two weeks. We can do a screening to evaluate the quality of your sleep and review treatment options with you.

What Are the Treatment Options for Sleep Problems?

- Your doctor may evaluate and treat your other medical conditions that impact your sleep.
- Your doctor may refer you to a sleep specialist for further evaluation.
- Your doctor may prescribe you a medication. Talk to your doctor before using over-the-counter sleep medications.
- Your dialysis social worker can meet with you to talk about your symptoms, provide support, and give you tips for sleeping better (see below).

What can I do to help myself Sleep Better?

- Go to bed and get up around the same time every day.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet room. Reserve the room for sleep and sex only.
- Drink less caffeine and maintain a regular meal schedule.
- Exercise regularly during the day.
- Avoid daytime naps.
- Do quiet activities until you are sleepy.
- Do not use nicotine.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before bed.
- Try a relaxation technique to reduce stress or worries

For More Information:

- University of Michigan Sleep Disorders Clinic: 734-936-9068
 - <https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/sleep/patient-information>
- Life Options: www.lifeoptions.org

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