NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION®

IgAN AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

IgAN's Impact on Emotional Wellness

Living with a chronic disease like IgA nephropathy (IgAN) can affect more than your body. It is common to feel sad, scared, frustrated or angry about a chronic illness. Your care partners, family members, and loved ones may experience similar feelings. These reactions are understandable. Kidney diseases such as IgAN can affect your emotional health in many ways:

- **Stress:** IgAN can be a major source of stress. IgAN can impact daily life, work, and relationships. IgAN can be stressful in other ways, including managing care, the costs of care, dietary restrictions, and schedule demands.
- **Social and Emotional Impact:** IgAN can cause feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and hopelessness. There can be a fear of being a burden to others, social isolation, and a struggle to maintain self-esteem. People with IgAN may also fear what comes next.
- **Anxiety and Depression:** Living with IgAN is linked with higher rates of anxiety and depression, compared to people without a long-term health problem. If you find yourself feeling overly sad, overwhelmed, crying a lot, or feeling like you want to give up, it's important to talk with a licensed professional. You can talk with a member of your healthcare team who can help you figure out if you need further help with a mental health professional. You can also call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988lifeline.org).

Physical Impact

It's important to remember that emotions and physical health are connected. High levels of chronic stress can hurt your health over time. Stress and anxiety can make it harder to sleep, eat well, stay active, take medications, and manage your health. Caring for your emotional health is an important part of caring for your physical health.

Ways to Support your Emotional Wellness

Here are some of the many to cope and support your emotional wellness, which can help your mental and physical health.

Manage stress

We all experience stress. It's part of life. But too much stress can contribute to poor health. There are many ways to cope and manage stress, which can help your mental and physical health.

- Eat healthier foods
- Stay active
- Set aside time to relax
- Relaxation techniques (yoga, meditation, etc.)
- Prayer
- Talk to a friend, loved one, spiritual leader, or healthcare professional
- Write down your problems to help organize your thoughts
- Get enough sleep and maintain a regular sleep schedule
- Spend time with loved ones

Learn as much as you can

Learning about your disease can help lower some of the fear and uncertainty. You can speak with your healthcare team to learn more. You can also learn more about IgAN at kidney.org/igan.

Find Support

Having people to turn to for support can be a great help while living with IgAN. Among those who can be a part of a support system include:

- Family and friends
- People also living with the same disease
- Care partners or parents caring for someone with IgAN
- A spouse or significant other
- Mentors and co-workers
- Members of your healthcare team
- Social, religious and spiritual groups

You can also contact organizations like the National Kidney Foundation (888.NKF.CARES, kidney.org/cares).

Ask for Help and Ask Questions

Friends and family want to support you, but they may not know. Share specific ways they can help. You can ask a friend or family member for help with managing your care, or if you need someone to go with you to appointments for emotional support. They can also just listen when you having a difficult time and need to talk.

You should also ask your healthcare team for help and advice, and for any questions you may have. Questions to ask about your emotional wellness can include the following.

- What can I do if I or a loved one feel overwhelmed or stressed?
- Who can I turn to for help?
- Could or should I speak with a mental health professional?
- How could I tell if I or a loved one is experiencing stress or something more like depression?



For more information, contact the National Kidney Foundation

Toll-free help line: **855.NKF.CARES** or email: **nkfcares@kidney.org**

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