

# General Symptoms of Mental Disorders

If you had a sore throat, swollen glands, and a fever you would tell the doctor your symptoms so they could treat you properly and you can get better. It is easy to tell the doctor symptoms of strep throat, a stomach bug, or any common condition because most of us are familiar with the symptoms. However, not everyone knows the symptoms of mental conditions. It is important for you to become aware of signs and symptoms of mental conditions so you know when it is appropriate to seek additional help.

Early treatment of mental disorders is important, especially as you are trying to handle kidney disease. The sooner you are able to receive help, the less you need to worry about it impacting the outcome of your kidney treatment. The following are lists of general symptoms and just because you have one or more of the symptoms, doesn't mean you need to seek help. These are meant for your guidance. Also, just because you don't have anything listed below doesn't mean you can't seek help from friends, family or a professional resource.

The following is an adapted list from Mental Health America (MHA)[1]:

## **In adults:**

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Denial of obvious problems
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance abuse

## **In older children and pre-adolescents:**

- Substance abuse
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Excessive complaints of physical ailments
- Defiance of authority, truancy, theft, and/or vandalism
- Intense fear of weight gain
- Prolonged negative mood, often accompanied by poor appetite or thoughts of death
- Frequent outbursts of anger

### **In younger children:**

- Changes in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety (i.e. refusing to go to bed or school)
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

If you have experienced any of the symptoms above, the next step is to have a conversation with your family or friends. There you can decide what to do next. In many instances the next step is to talk to your doctor. They are familiar with your medical condition and life situation and serve as a source of information. When you have kidney disease or are on dialysis there could be side effects from the treatment such as tiredness that may leave you thinking that you could have a mental disorder. However, a symptom such as tiredness could instead be due to anemia, which is common in kidney disease patients. Your doctor will help you determine if additional testing is needed.

[1] Mental Health America. Mental Illness and the Family: Recognizing Warning Signs and How to Cope. Retrieved from <http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/mi-and-the-family/recognizing-warning-signs-and-how-to-cope> [1]

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### **Links**

[1] <http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/mi-and-the-family/recognizing-warning-signs-and-how-to-cope>