



Kidney disease & mental health

Facts for whānau

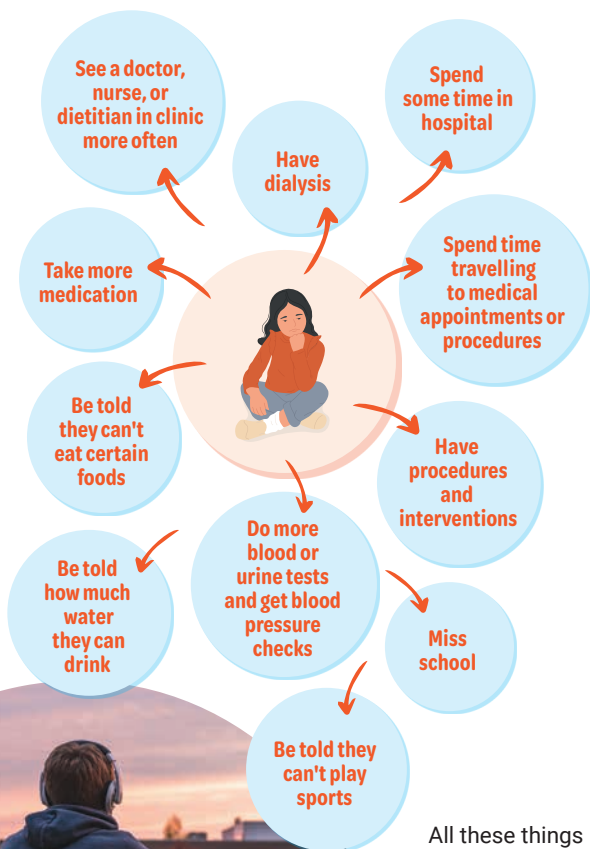


Advice in this pamphlet is only intended as a guideline.
Please check with your GP or specialist if you have any
questions relating to your child's condition.

How kidney disease can affect your child's mental wellbeing

Children, teenagers and young adults with kidney disease can experience anxiety, depression and other mental health issues.

Poor kidney function generally means more medical intervention. This can impact your child's mental and emotional wellbeing because they need to:



All these things can cause distress for you, your child and your whānau.



What are normal feelings?

It's normal to not like having blood tests, or finger pricks.

Talk to your child's healthcare team who can work with you and your child to find the best way to make your child feel less anxious or worried about these tests each time they have them.

It's normal if they don't feel good if they're on medications.

Medications have side effects. Let your child's doctor know if they don't feel good.

It's normal to feel tired or have difficulty concentrating at school if your tamariki are due for or on dialysis.

Talk to your child's healthcare team. They can help with this. Sometimes it's a reason to start dialysis early.

It's normal to have less of an appetite if they're due for dialysis.

It's important your child eats enough food to gain enough nutrients to grow. They might need help with this in the form of nutritional drinks or formulas.

It's normal to have overwhelming feelings when they think about their health, or when they think about having a procedure.

Ask your child to talk about those feelings to you and/or their kidney team, so you can both help them work through these and understand them.

Overwhelming feelings

Some tamariki and rangatahi might experience overwhelming feelings about their health or just feel overwhelmed in general.

You may notice they are:

- **Feeling like they don't have anything to look forward to**
- **Having difficulty sleeping, or are sleeping too much**
- **Always feeling tired, even after a long rest**
- **Feeling like they don't have control over their health or life**

All of these feelings and responses are normal, but they can start to impact their day-to-day life.

If your child is not coping well, expressing that they are feeling overwhelmed or thinking about hurting themselves, provide them with a safe space to talk about this.

For more support and help, there are many great organisations and resources you and your tamariki and rangatahi can use:

- **Youthline NZ:** Provides free help and support for young people and their mental health.
Free text 234 | Ph 0800 376633 for 24/7 Helpline
Visit youthline.co.nz
- **What's Up:** free counselling helpline for kids and teens
Ph 0800 942 8787 Mon–Sun 11am–11pm
Chat online at whatsup.co.nz
- **1737:** Free support 24/7 for anyone needing resources or emotional support. Free call or text 1737 any time.
Visit 1737.org.nz
- **thelowdown.co.nz:**
"Straight up answers for when life sucks"
- **Family Planning:** Sexual health/contraception advice, free for those under 22 years old.
Visit familyplanning.org.nz
- **Rainbow Youth:** Support, info and resources for gender diverse, queer, takatāpui and intersex youth, their friends and whānau. Visit ry.org.nz

How kidney disease can affect your child's development

Younger children with chronic kidney disease or kidney failure can sometimes have development delays.

The younger tamariki are when diagnosed, the higher the risk of delays in:

- **Speech and language**
- **Gross motor skills**
- **Weaning baby food**
- **Attention pathways in the brain**

It's not uncommon for tamariki with kidney disease to also have challenges with **attention deficit and hyperactivity syndrome (ADHD)**, **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**, **dyslexia** and other **cognitive** or **learning difficulties**.

Should you, your child, or teachers express any concerns about your child's development, reach out to your kidney healthcare team. They can assist with a referral for further assessment with a clinical psychologist.

A clinical psychologist is a professional who can complete mental health assessments, including cognitive assessments.



Kidney Kids has plenty of information about conditions that can affect children's kidneys. If you can't find the information you are looking for, please contact us.





Our vision is for all Kidney Kids and their whānau to lead their best lives and to feel supported, understood and connected in a caring community.

Get in touch

If you would like more information about our organisation, or if you, your whānau or friends have a child with a kidney condition and you would like to register with us, please get in touch.

Find us

0800 215 437 – Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm
or email support@kidneykids.org.nz

kidneykids.org.nz

