

## Tossing and Turning?



### ***Here are***

Some Helpful Suggestions for Sleeping Problems.

As a person with kidney failure, you may wish you were sleeping enough to even have a nightmare! Trouble going to sleep, restless legs, walking in the middle of the night ---- all these may feel like a nightmare in themselves.

**You're not alone.** About half of all dialysis patients have problems sleeping. This compares with about 12% of other people.

### The Nightmare of Sleeping Problems

Your sleep problem may have several causes which make it hard to treat, but this information may help you solve or reduce your problems.

#### **Poor Sleep Habits**

Ideally, people should sleep well at night, and then spend the day feeling rested and alert. In reality, your sleep patterns may be different.

You may wake up in the morning feeling drowsy and have coffee with caffeine to stay awake. Later you get drowsy, take a nap, then take more caffeine to wake up and later drink alcohol to relax.

By evening you are too sleepy to stay awake. You go to bed but feel too awake to go to sleep.

Often people who sleep during dialysis are wide awake at night. You sleep for a while, then you're in and out of bed. You wake up late and get up feeling groggy, just to start the cycle over again.

You're sleepy, frustrated, you feel miserable, and it's interfering with your life in many ways.

## **What You Can Do to Help.**

Attacking poor sleep patterns requires a structured approach. It takes time so you need to really stick with this program. If you only do it only part of the time it will not be helpful.

### **Start a Structured Sleep Program**

1. Choose a time to get up based on your normal pattern (say 7 am).
2. Get up at the same time all week, even on days when you don't have to.
3. Determine how long you think you really sleep at night. (For you this might be as short as 5 hours or as long as 9 hours.)
4. Work back from your wake up time, this determines your new bedtime.
5. Stay active enough to stay awake. Take a walk during the day or do some activity you enjoy. On dialysis try reading or watching TV
6. After 5 to 7 days of sleeping the entire time (waking with the alarm), start adding 10 to 15 minutes after every successful 5 to 7 nights of sleep.
7. If you do not sleep the entire time, back off to your previous sleep time for several more nights and then proceed.
8. Gradually you will sleep longer and better.

As you can see, this takes time and, above all, it takes willpower at first. You will still feel very sleepy during the day, but your nights will feel much less frustrating. Life may also feel less out of control because you know something is being done to reduce or solve your problem.

## GUIDELINES

Do not stay in bed more than 10 to 15 minutes after waking, even in the middle of the night.

- Do not watch TV or work in bed. Reading is helpful for some but not for others.
- Do not work, eat a meal, or drink alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine within 10 – 12 hours of bed.
- Do not smoke.
- Avoid sedatives or sleeping pills, you want natural sleep. (Don't stop taking any medications without talking to your doctor.)
- Set aside a daily "planning and worry time" perhaps 20 minutes, so you don't need to worry while trying to fall asleep.
- Renovate your bedroom to help you sleep. Get a better pillow, get rid of TV, work, pets and other distractions. Darken your windows with drapes or shades, add black plastic if needed, adjust the room temperature.

## **When should you go to a Sleep Disorder Center or Doctor?**

If daytime sleepiness is your usual pattern.

- If you snore (especially if someone observes pauses in your breathing) and either you are sleepy during the day, or you have heart problems or high blood pressure.
- If sleep problems interfere with your health, well-being, and quality of life.

## **Sleep Disorder Centers**

There are sleep disorder services in many communities. Check in the yellow pages under the "Physicians & Surgeons -M.D. (Medical) heading.

Following the alphabetical list is a listing of doctors under headings for the type of medicine they practice. Look under "Sleep Disorders" in this section.

Also check under the "Hospital" heading. You may find sleep disorder services listed in the white pages under the names of hospitals.



### **Why you should worry about sleep problems.**

Besides the sleepiness, frustration, etc., that are part of sleep problems, there are several important reasons to be concerned about poor sleep.

Physical side effects can include:

- An increase in cardiovascular (heart and blood circulation) problems.
- An increased risk for shortened life span.