

Psychology services for kidney patients

This leaflet explains more about the psychology team's role, and the help they can offer kidney patients.

If you have any further questions or if you would like more information, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

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What do psychologists do?

Psychologists provide assessment and counselling services. They work closely with your healthcare team in the hospital and in the community to contribute to your overall health and emotional well-being. They help patients to cope with, and adjust to, their healthcare conditions.

Psychologists are different from psychiatrists. Psychiatrists are medical doctors that can prescribe medications. Psychologists neither advise on, nor prescribe medications.

Why would I choose to see a psychologist?

It is normal to feel a range of emotions when you are told you have a long-term health condition, such as kidney disease. These may include feelings of anger, sadness, worry and disbelief. If you are finding it difficult to cope with these changing emotions, and would like some support, you may wish to see a psychologist.

You may experience different emotions or stress at different stages of your kidney care. The psychology team are there to help at all stages, particularly:

- at the beginning of your kidney care journey
- when you are starting dialysis
- during your dialysis treatment
- if you are having a transplant
- if your transplant fails
- or, at the end of your kidney care journey.

The team can help if you are experiencing any of the following:

- low mood or depression
- anxiety or stress
- difficulties coming to terms with your diagnosis
- difficulties coping with uncertainty about your health and treatment
- difficulties adjusting to everyday life while living with kidney disease
- fears about the future.

Carers can also ask for psychological help if they are finding it difficult to cope with caring for a loved one.

What happens at my psychology appointment?

Appointments take place in one of our clinics and last for one hour. At your first appointment the psychologist will talk to you about your concerns, make an assessment and tell you whether a series of psychological support sessions are likely to be helpful.

Follow-up appointments are usually once a month and are booked in advance. Most people will have six to eight sessions depending on their individual needs.

The psychologist may also give you some self-help work for you to do between sessions.

Are my sessions with the psychologist confidential?

Yes, your sessions are confidential unless the psychologist feels that there is a serious risk to yourself or others, such as the risk of self-harm, physical or emotional or financial abuse.

If a risk is identified, the psychologist has a professional responsibility to take appropriate action to protect you, and/or others.

How do I contact a psychologist?

Talk to your kidney care consultant or nurse who can contact the psychology team on your behalf.

Alternatively, you can contact the team directly – please see the ‘Contact us’ box on the next page.

Can I see a psychologist or mental health professional in my local community?

Yes, if you would prefer to see a community psychologist in your local area, contact your GP, as they may have a psychologist or counsellor in their practice.

Alternatively, they may refer you to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), or to a local community mental health centre (depending on available local services).

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) is an NHS programme that offers psychological support for people with depression and anxiety. You can also refer yourself to local mental health care services if you prefer.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like further information on how the psychology team can help, please contact us on:

020 7188 9770 or 0207 188 7845

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815

e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS

Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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