



**ST. VINCENT'S
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**
Elm Park

Renal Psychology

Patient Information Leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about the Renal Psychology Service for patients with kidney disease at St. Vincent's University Hospital. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.





Kidney disease can have a major impact on someone's life. Here at St. Vincent's University Hospital, we recognise that Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) can affect emotional health as well as physical health. Our Renal Psychology Service specialises in helping people cope with and adjust to their kidney disease and its treatment.

Psychologists can help people in a variety of ways. Rather than prescribing medications, psychologists are trained to help people talk through their problems, which can help people to find better ways of managing their difficulties. They are also skilled in helping people to make important changes to their lifestyle to improve their health and general well-being.

Who is this service available for?

This service is available to any public patient diagnosed with kidney disease who is under the care of a renal consultant at St. Vincent's University Hospital. This includes any patient who receives their care at satellite units belonging to the service e.g. Beacon South Quarter, Sandyford.

You can avail of this service at any stage of your kidney disease and treatment, including before dialysis and after transplant. The service is free and is considered part of your multi-disciplinary care.

What can we help with?

People attend the Renal Psychology Service for lots of different reasons but some of the most common ones include:

- Adjusting to your diagnosis and the changes and losses it might have brought
- Talking through important treatment decisions
- Tackling lifestyle changes as part of your medical care
- Worries or fears about the future in relation to your kidney disease
- Learning new skills and techniques to manage the impact of your kidney condition on your mood, e.g. feeling down or anxious
- Getting used to life on dialysis or with a transplant
- Living with uncertainty
- Coping with the effects of kidney disease on relationships or sexual intimacy
- Communicating with others about your renal condition or treatment
- Worries about your illness getting worse or your transplant failing
- Coping with side effects of treatment, such as fatigue
- Work and family concerns
- Coping with long hospital admissions or post-operative complications
- Handling feelings of low self-esteem, such as feeling useless or a burden on others

If your problem is not directly related to your kidney disease, we may be able to help you find appropriate support in your local area.

How do I access the service?

If you feel that you might benefit from talking to a psychologist, please let a member of your renal team know. They will help you to decide if this is the most appropriate service for you and can complete a referral form on your behalf.

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What happens after I have been referred?

You will be added to a waiting list, and contacted as soon as an appointment becomes available.

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Who will I see?

The person you will see will usually be a qualified clinical psychologist who specialises in working with people with kidney problems. You will usually see the same person throughout your care. You may be asked if you would be willing to see a psychologist in clinical training. This psychologist will be closely supervised by a qualified clinical psychologist.

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Where will I see the psychologist?

You will typically see the psychologist for an outpatient appointment in St. Vincent's Hospital. It may be possible for the psychologist to see you during dialysis (in St. Vincent's Hospital only) if this is your preference. If you are an inpatient, you will be seen on the ward.

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How often will I see the psychologist?

You and the psychologist can discuss how often it would be best to meet. Some people see the psychologist only once or twice, others may see them once a fortnight for six to eight sessions.

You can always be re-referred to the renal psychology service if needed in the future.

Do I have to see a psychologist?

The Renal Psychology Service is a consent-based service. This means that although one of your kidney care team may have suggested you might benefit from seeing a psychologist, you can choose not to.

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Do you see family members or carers?

Currently, this service is only available for patients. We hope that with additional resources in the future, we might be able to extend this to family members and carers.

If you have a family member or a partner who is in need of some support specifically in connection to living with or caring for someone who has a renal condition, please reach out to the Irish Kidney Association (IKA) Counselling Service on (01) 620 5306 or email counselling@ika.ie

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Will my information be confidential?

The psychologist will take notes during or after your appointment. These will be stored securely and confidentially. A very brief summary of the session will be put into your main medical notes to help the whole renal team look after you in the best way they can. If there is anything you wish to keep completely confidential, you can let the psychologist know.

As with all psychological services, there are some specific limits to confidentiality. If it becomes clear that there is a safety risk to you or another, including a child, your psychologist would not be able to keep that confidential. The psychologist will explain this to you at your first session. This is normal procedure for anyone attending any counselling service.

Is there anything else important to know?

Please note that we are not an emergency service and there may be a wait for your appointment. If you need urgent help, please contact your GP, attend your nearest emergency department (A&E) or speak to ward staff if you are currently admitted to hospital.

We have access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please let a member of the team know and we will do our best to meet your needs.



If you have an appointment with the Renal Psychology Service and cannot attend, please phone or leave a message with the administrator on (01) 221 4493 as we may be able to offer that appointment to another patient.

Irish Kidney Association (IKA)

Nationwide counselling support (both in-person and online) is also available with the IKA, free of charge. The counselling service is open to all those diagnosed with kidney disease, their family and carers. Please visit www.ika.ie/counselling for more information.

The IKA also run a **Peer Support Service**. Many people who face challenges find it helpful to talk with someone who is or has been in a similar situation. Peer support can provide you with many benefits including:

- Being able to talk to someone who has had to cope with similar experiences and understands the challenges you are facing
- Sharing common experiences
- Sharing information, Learning and practical experiences
- Helping you to feel greater confidence in taking control of managing your kidney disease
- Get a better understanding of your treatment and treatment options
- Reassurance that you are not alone

To talk with a peer supporter, please visit www.ika.ie/peersupport or contact the IKA directly.

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