

After the Hurricanes:

Some Steps for Healthy Coping

Hurricane season 2005 caused major disruption in the lives of Floridians, particularly those who live with chronic illness. The after-effects of Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma will be with us for a long time. Things may never be the same, but they will get better. Here are some things you can do to help with recovery:

- ✓ Set small goals to tackle big problems. Take one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
- ✓ Breathe deeply every day, as often as possible.
- ✓ Talk to people who you know care about you.
- ✓ Keep a journal.
- ✓ Do not numb the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse problems will make things worse.
- ✓ Keep your life as normal as possible.
- ✓ It is all right to spend time by yourself.
- ✓ Do not make any big life changes in reaction to the events.
- ✓ Do not make as many day-to-day decisions as possible, which will give you the feeling of control over your life.
- ✓ Consult a counselor if you need assistance.
- ✓ HUMOR! Laughter can relieve stress and help you to feel better. Rent a funny movie or tell jokes.
- ✓ Allow yourself time to recover. Do not expect too much of yourself.
- ✓ Get outdoors - take a walk, enjoy a bit of nature.
- ✓ Try to be patient when dealing with others.
- ✓ Take time now to plan for a future disaster.
- ✓ Help others get through their difficulty.
- ✓ Reward yourself with things that make you feel good.
- ✓ Watch your diet - avoid caffeine and sugar.
- ✓ Limit the amount of time you spend watching TV / hearing radio disaster news.
- ✓ Make plans now on how to find your loved ones in the event of an emergency.

Here are some resources:

- ◆ **Preparing for Emergencies: A Guide for People on Dialysis**
www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/101.pdf
- ◆ **FMQAI: The Florida ESRD Network (Network 7)**
www.fmqai.com/ESRD/esrd.htm or 800-826-3773
- ◆ **National Kidney Foundation of Florida** www.kidneyfla.org or 800-927-9659
- ◆ **American Association of Kidney Patients** www.aakp.org or 800-749-2257
- ◆ **National Mental Health Association** www.nmha.org or 800-969-NMHA
- ◆ **PTSD Alliance** www.ptsdalliance.org or 877-507-PTSD
- ◆ **AARP** www.aarp.org/griefandloss/
- ◆ **American Red Cross** www.redcross.org/index.html or 866-438-4636

Remember that your dialysis social worker is available to help you with disaster planning and the aftermath of disasters. You may also contact the Network at 800-826-3773.