

# *Stress Management During a Disaster*

In times of a natural disaster or traumatic event, dialysis patients, like others, will focus on surviving: getting to safety, finding a place to stay, locating a functioning dialysis unit. When our lives are disrupted—and especially when family, friends or pets are injured, missing, or deceased, or homes are damaged or lost—we may show signs of stress that can negatively impact our physical and mental health.

Physical signs of stress may include:

- Changes in appetite
- Nausea or diarrhea
- Sweating or chills
- Shaking / trembling
- Being easily startled
- Insomnia

Emotional signs of stress may include:

- Trouble concentrating and remembering
- Difficulty making decisions
- Mentally replaying scenes of the disaster
- Feeling sad, depressed, disconnected, or even “numb” (unable to experience feeling)
- Having nightmares
- Feeling anxious, fearful, overwhelmed, guilty, angry, or out of control.

Strategies to cope with stress include:

- Getting plenty of sleep
- Eating nutritious food
- Talking about feelings with other evacuees and staff
- Exercising daily
- Using known coping skills (i.e. – ways you have successfully coped with difficult times in the past.)