

Diabetes, depression, and stress

Cornerstones4Care®

Diabetes and depression

If you have diabetes and you have had symptoms of depression, you are not alone. That's because people with diabetes are more likely to have depression than people without diabetes. This may be due to:

- The strain of managing diabetes on a daily basis
- Feeling alone and “different” from family and friends
- Feeling out of control if you are having trouble keeping your blood sugar in your target range

Depression can make managing your diabetes more difficult

Depression can make it difficult to follow your diabetes care plan. If you are depressed, you may not have the energy to:

- Prepare and eat healthy meals
- Get regular physical activity
- Take diabetes medicines
- Check your blood sugar



Recognizing depression

Recognizing that you may have depression is the first step to getting help and feeling better. But how do you know if you are depressed? Depression is more than just feeling blue from time to time. If you have been feeling sad or down in the dumps for several days, ask yourself if you're also feeling any of these symptoms:

- Loss of pleasure in doing things you used to enjoy
- Difficulty sleeping, or sleeping more than usual
- Eating more or less than you used to, resulting in a fast weight gain or loss
- Trouble paying attention
- Lack of energy
- Nervousness
- Feeling guilty and like you are a burden to others
- Feeling worse in the morning than you do later in the day
- Feeling like you want to die or take your own life



Getting help

Treatment is available for depression. The first step is to talk with your diabetes care team. Tell them how you've been feeling. Let them know that you think you may need help. Recovery may take a little time, but you *can* feel better.

Diabetes, depression, and stress

Diabetes and stress

Like depression and diabetes, stress and diabetes are linked. And once again, each may lead to the other.

Stress can increase your blood sugar.

When we are faced with stress, our bodies get ready to take action. This is called the fight-or-flight response. The cells of the body need sugar for energy to fight or to run away. But in people with diabetes, insulin may not be available to let this extra sugar into the cells. So it stays in the blood.

Increased blood sugar levels can cause stress.

If you are having difficulty managing your blood sugar levels, your stress level may increase.

Check your patterns

Is stress affecting your blood sugar levels? Here's how to find out:

- Before you check your blood sugar levels, rate your current stress level on a scale of 1 to 10. Write the number down
- Check your blood sugar. Write your level down
- After a week or two, look for a pattern. Do high stress levels and high blood sugar levels often occur together? If they do, stress may be affecting your blood sugar control



Learning to relax

There are several things you can do to relax and lower your stress level.

- **Physical activity.** Moving your body through a wide range of motion can help you relax. Three movements to try are stretching, circling, and shaking parts of your body
- **Breathing exercises.** Sit or lie down. Breathe in deeply. Then push out as much air as you can. Breathe in and out again, this time focusing on relaxing your muscles. Continue for 5 to 20 minutes at a time
- **Progressive relaxation.** In this method, you tense and then relax the muscles of your body. Start with your toes and move up, one muscle group at a time, to your head
- **Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.** Each time you find yourself having a bad thought (like, "I'm never going to get my blood sugar into my target range"), replace it with a positive one (like, "My blood sugar may not always be in my target range, but my last two readings were really close!")

Managing diabetes-related stress

To manage the stress that comes from living with diabetes:

- **Consider joining a support group.** Knowing that others are going through similar experiences can help you feel less alone. You can also share ideas for coping with diabetes
- **Get help from your diabetes care team.** If there is a part of your diabetes care plan that is stressful for you, talk with your team. It is almost always possible to make changes so that your plan will be easier for you to follow

For more information, visit Cornerstones4Care.com

Novo Nordisk Inc. grants permission to reproduce this piece for nonprofit educational purposes only on condition that the piece is maintained in its original format and that the copyright notice is displayed. Novo Nordisk Inc. reserves the right to revoke this permission at any time.

Cornerstones4Care® is a registered trademark of Novo Nordisk A/S.

© 2013 Novo Nordisk All rights reserved. 0313-00014145-1 May 2013 Cornerstones4Care.com

