

Your emotional health and diabetes

Stress affects blood sugar levels

Some sources of stress are caused by physical conditions, such as surgery or illness. Other types of stress are emotional, such as family problems or worries about money. All kinds of stressful situations can cause your blood sugar levels to rise.

It is important to learn how to reduce your stress. This can help keep your blood sugar levels within target range.

What you can do to handle stress

You may find it easier to handle stressful situations by changing the way you deal with stress. For example, some people work to solve the problem. Others accept that certain situations are not as bad as they appear to be at first glance. Both of these can result in better blood sugar levels. Also consider joining a support group for people with diabetes.

Dealing with the physical, mental, and emotional demands of diabetes can be overwhelming. Extreme emotions, stressful situations, and depression can affect good self-care.



Learning new ways to relax can also help you handle stress. Try these:

- Doing breathing exercises. Sit or lie down and uncross your legs and arms. Take a deep breath and then push out as much air as you can. Breathe in and out again, this time relaxing your muscles while breathing out. Repeat for 5 to 20 minutes at a time. Do at least once a day.
- Practicing progressive relaxation therapy, in which you tense muscles and then relax them. It can be learned in a clinic or from an audio tape.
- Being physically active. By moving your body through a wide range of motion, you can help relax it. Three ways to loosen up through movement are circling, stretching, and shaking parts of your body. To make this exercise more fun, move with music.
- Joining a support group for people with diabetes.

Depression and diabetes

Although everyone feels sad or down from time to time, people who have diabetes run a greater risk of depression. Put a checkmark next to any of the following symptoms of depression you have.

- Loss of pleasure**—You no longer take an interest in doing things you used to enjoy.
- Change in sleep patterns**—You have trouble falling asleep, you wake often during the night, or you want to sleep more than usual even during the day.
- Rising early**—You wake up earlier than usual and cannot get back to sleep.
- Change in appetite**—You eat more or less than you used to, causing quick weight gain or loss.
- Trouble concentrating**—You can't watch a TV show or read an article because other thoughts or feelings get in the way.
- Loss of energy**—You feel tired all of the time.
- Nervousness**—You always feel anxious or you can't sit still.
- Guilt**—You feel like you never do anything right and worry that you are a burden to others.
- Morning sadness**—You feel worse in the morning than you do the rest of the day.

Count the checkmarks. It's time to get help if you checked 3 or more boxes or you checked 1 or 2 boxes but have been feeling bad for 2 weeks or more.

What you can do

If your health care provider rules out physical causes, he or she will most likely refer you to a mental health provider. Short- or long-term counseling with a specially trained health care provider can help you look at the problems that bring on depression. Together, you and your therapist can seek ways to improve your mental health.

Don't wait to get help

If you have symptoms of depression, don't wait too long to get help. Your local American Diabetes Association can help you find counselors who work with people with diabetes.



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