

The emotional side of diabetes

Diabetes can take a lot of effort to manage. So it's not surprising that many people who have it feel overwhelmed. If you have felt that way, you're not alone. Read on to learn more about the emotional side of diabetes—and what you can do about it.

Diabetes-related distress

Diabetes-related distress is a term used to describe the frustration, worry, and burnout that often go along with having diabetes. It is different from clinical depression and is very common among people with diabetes and their family members.

It's easy to understand how diabetes-related distress can happen. There's so much of diabetes care that you have to do yourself. You have to check your blood sugar. You have to take your medicine. You have to follow your meal plan and your activity plan. After a while, those tasks can feel a bit overwhelming. But there is a lot you can do to relieve diabetes-related distress!



What you can do about diabetes-related distress

Here are some tips to try:

Take changes one at a time

Let's say that your diabetes care team says that you should change your meal plan and your activity plan. Talk with your team to decide which one will be easier for you. Then do just that one. When you're okay with that change, you can make the next one.

Accept that you can't control everything

Even when you're doing everything right, your blood sugar may not be on target all the time. Continue to do the best you can. But go easy on yourself.

Get support from people who can relate

No one knows what you go through as well as others with diabetes do. Talk with them. You can learn a lot about how to cope. And you will definitely learn that you're not alone.

The emotional side of diabetes

Diabetes and stress

The stress of everyday life affects all of us. But diabetes can add an additional source of stress. And severe stress can have an effect on your blood sugar control.

Severe stress can increase your blood sugar

When we are faced with severe 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.

Learning to relax

If you're under severe stress, you may want to talk with your diabetes care team about what you're going through and see what might help. For everyday stress, there are several things you can do to relax and lower your stress levels.

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.

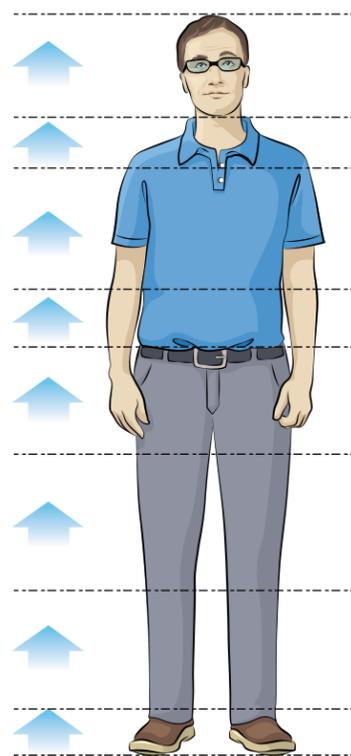


Breathing exercises

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.



Start at the bottom and work up

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!").

Diabetes and depression

If you have diabetes and you have had symptoms of depression, you are not alone. Most people with diabetes do not have depression. But people with diabetes are at greater risk for it. So it's important to recognize the signs.

Recognizing signs of 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 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

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



Take diabetes medicines



Get regular physical activity



Check your blood sugar



Getting help

Depression is a disease. And there are resources to help. Treatment for depression is available.

Depression can be treated with medicine for depression (which is different from your medicine for diabetes), counseling, or both. 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. Then you can get treatment. Your team is there to help you. You *can* feel better.

The emotional side of diabetes

Tracking the emotional side of diabetes

In the spaces below, write down how you feel for 4 weeks. Try to see if there are any patterns. For example, do you feel stressed in the morning but better in the evening? Do you feel depressed when your blood sugar is not at your target? Make copies of the tracker so that you can record how you feel over time. Share your tracker with your diabetes care team.

Example Week of: *November 5*

I felt stressed this morning when I woke up late and still had to pack my lunch.

Week 1 Week of:

Week 2 Week of:

Week 3 Week of:

Week 4 Week of:

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.

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

© 2016 Novo Nordisk All rights reserved. USA16PCT01524 May 2016 Cornerstones4Care.com

