

Diabetes and Depression

We all feel down or sad at times, but people with diabetes have a greater risk of being depressed. Feeling sad sometimes is normal. When the sadness lasts a long time, or when life feels hopeless, you may need some help.



Depression can make it hard to enjoy your life. It can also affect your blood glucose (also called blood sugar). When you are upset or have negative feelings, your body makes stress hormones. These hormones can make your blood glucose (blood sugar) go up. Feeling depressed can also make it harder to take care of your diabetes because you may not have the energy to do everything you need to do for your health. So it is important to get help if you think you are depressed.

Spotting depression

Identifying symptoms of depression is the first step. Below are some signs that you might have depression.

Check any that you have:

- ☐ I feel sad or alone (for more than a couple of weeks).
- ☐ I have lost interest in activities I used to enjoy.
- ☐ I don't spend time with my family and friends.
- ☐ I get frustrated easily.
- ☐ I eat too much or too little.
- ☐ I can't sleep, or I sleep too much.
- ☐ I can't focus on easy tasks.
- ☐ I have lost interest in sex.

If you have feelings of hopelessness and think you don't want to be alive or you might want to hurt yourself, call your health care provider right away or go to your nearest emergency room. You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**. This is a free, confidential number that anyone can call.

If you checked any of these things, you may need to get support. Talk to your diabetes care team. Ask for a referral to a therapist or a counselor.

If you think you are having symptoms of depression, don't keep them to yourself.

Getting help

If you think you are having symptoms of depression, don't keep them to yourself. First, talk them over with your doctor, so that he/she can determine if there is a physical cause for your depression.

High blood glucose can cause symptoms that look like depression.

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During the day, high or low blood glucose levels may make you feel tired or anxious. Low blood glucose levels can also lead to hunger and eating too much. If you have low blood glucose at night, it could disturb your sleep. You may get up often to urinate and then feel tired during the day.

Some other physical causes of depression can include:

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Thyroid problems
- Side effects from some medications

Do not stop taking a medication without telling your doctor. Your doctor will be able to help you discover if a physical problem is at the root of your sad feelings.

Mental Health Treatment

If you and your doctor rule out physical causes for your symptoms of depression, your doctor will most likely refer you to a specialist. You might talk with a:

- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Psychiatric nurse
- Licensed clinical social worker
- Professional counselor

Did you know?

Depression affects almost 1 in 4 people with diabetes. Depression is twice as common in women as in men.

All of these mental health professionals can guide you through the rough waters of depression. In general, there are three different types of treatment:

- Psychotherapy, or counseling
- Antidepressant medication
- A combination of both talk therapy and medication

Therapy

Therapy with a well-trained therapist can help you look at the problems that bring on depression. It can also help you find ways to relieve the problem. Therapy can be short term or long term. It is important that you feel at ease with the therapist you choose.

Medication

If you decide to try an antidepressant medication, talk to your therapist and your diabetes health care provider about side effects, including how it might affect your blood glucose levels. Many people do well with a combination of medication and psychotherapy.



If you have symptoms of depression, don't wait to get help. If your doctor cannot refer you to a mental health professional, contact your insurance company or the local branch of organizations for psychologists or mental health counselors. Your local **American Diabetes Association** may also be a good resource for counselors who have worked with people with diabetes.