

Diabetes and Stress

Everyone has stress in their lives. Whether it's being stuck in a traffic jam, worrying about paying the bills, starting a new job, or caring for a sick parent, stress affects everyone. For people with diabetes, stress management isn't just about finding ways to relax, it's also about managing blood glucose levels.

Your body makes stress hormones when under stress. These hormones can make your blood glucose go up, making diabetes harder to manage.

Stress can also affect your blood glucose numbers in other ways: it can make it harder to focus on your diabetes care. You may eat too much or not enough, avoid exercise, or forget to take your medicines.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, your blood glucose levels don't stay in your target range. You're not alone. In addition to stress, there are so many things that can affect your blood glucose each day — and not all of them are within your control. You may have variations in insulin absorption or changes in the amounts of food or levels of physical activity from day to day.

Other Effects of High and Low Blood Glucose

While stress can affect your blood glucose levels, the opposite is true too. High or low blood glucose levels can affect your emotions.

When blood glucose is high, you may feel cranky, tired and not have enough energy to get things done. Having high blood glucose may also cause you to worry more about your diabetes and increase your stress level.

If your blood glucose is too low, you may feel nervous, start to argue, or not be able to think clearly. If your blood glucose is low you may need help getting something to eat.

Managing Stress

Here are some ways you can manage stress:

- Talk to someone you trust about your stress.
- Allow time to pray or meditate.
- Find ways to laugh and spend time with people you enjoy.
- Get help instead of trying to do everything yourself.
- Set limits on what you will do for others.
- Schedule only those things you can really complete each day.
- Work on one thing at a time.
- Be physically active.
- Take up a hobby or activity you enjoy.
- Join a support group or online chat.
- Try ways to relax such as deep breathing, yoga, or dancing.
- Think of what you have done to help yourself. Do not put yourself down about the things you have not been able to do yet.

Ignoring stress or pretending it does not exist does not help. Using alcohol, cigarettes or other substances to cope with stress can harm your health and make it harder to manage diabetes. Instead, make time to spend with friends. You could go on a walk together. Physical activity, a good laugh or talking with good friends can relieve stress and help you feel much better!

More handouts about this and other topics can be found at <http://professional.diabetes.org/PatientEd>