



Mind Matters: Stress, Depression, and Type 2 Diabetes

Coping with the physical, mental, and emotional demands of type 2 diabetes can be overwhelming. Extreme emotions, stressful situations, and depression can block good diabetes self-care.

Stress affects blood sugar levels

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

For people with type 2 diabetes, mental stress causes a rise in blood sugar levels. This happens because stress blocks the production of insulin, a hormone that helps control blood sugar. Physical stress also can cause blood sugar levels to rise. Despite stress, it is important that people with type 2 diabetes learn how to keep their blood sugar levels within their target range.

What you can do

Thankfully, you can take steps to handle stressful situations. You can learn techniques to help you relax, to change your coping style, and to deal with stress.

For instance, some people adopt a problem-solving attitude, working to confront and fix the situation at hand. Other people accept that certain situations are not as bad as they appear to be at first glance. Both ways of coping with stress result in better management of blood sugar levels. Other ways to help yourself relax include:

- Breathing exercises
- Relaxation therapy
- Exercise
- Replacing hurtful thoughts with good ones
- Making changes to avoid stressful situations
- Joining a support group for people with type 2 diabetes

Depression and type 2 diabetes

Although everyone feels sad or down from time to time, people who have type 2 diabetes run a greater risk of depression than people who don't have the condition. If you have more than 3 of the symptoms below or if you experience 2 of them for 2 weeks or longer, you should speak to your health care team.

- Loss of pleasure
- Change in appetite
- Trouble concentrating



Mind Matters: Stress, Depression, and Type 2 Diabetes

- Nervous or guilty feelings
- Reduced energy/feeling tired
- Change in sleep patterns
- Morning sadness
- Thoughts of suicide

Depression can affect diabetes management

Having depression can make it harder to manage your diabetes. If you're tired, you may not feel like exercising or testing your blood sugar as often as you should. If you can't concentrate, you may not be able to think clearly about what food choices you should make. You may feel overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness or doubts about your self-worth and not want to eat at all.

Situations like these can affect your blood sugar levels and your health, which in turn can affect how you feel. So it's important that you get the help you need.

What you can do

Your doctor is key to helping treat your depressive symptoms. As a first step, he or she may recommend that you talk with a professional who specializes in mental health issues—a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse, licensed clinical social worker, or professional counselor who is knowledgeable about the complications of diabetes.

Short- or long-term counseling with a specially trained health care professional can help you look at the problems that bring on depression. Together, you and your therapist can seek ways to relieve the problems you experience.

For more information about diabetes, please visit JourneyForControl.com.

