

Diabetes and Depression

- People with diabetes are at greater risk for depression.
- Poor diabetes control can cause symptoms that look like depression.
- If physical causes are ruled out, you may be referred to a specialist for mental health treatment, including psychotherapy and antidepressant medication.

Feeling down once in a while is normal. But some people feel a sadness that just won't go away. Life seems hopeless. Feeling this way most of the day for two weeks or more is a sign of serious depression.

Does diabetes cause depression?

At any given time, most people with diabetes do not have depression. But studies show that people with diabetes have a greater risk of depression than people without diabetes. There are no easy answers about why this is true.

The stress of daily diabetes management can build. You may feel alone or set apart from your friends and family because of all this extra work.

If you face diabetes complications such as nerve damage, or if you are having trouble keeping your blood sugar levels where you'd like, you may feel like you're losing control of your diabetes. Even tension between you and your doctor may make you feel frustrated and sad.

Just like denial, depression can get you into a vicious cycle. It can block good diabetes self-care. If you are depressed and have no energy, chances are you will find such tasks as regular blood sugar testing too much. If you feel so anxious that you can't think straight, it will be hard to keep up with a good diet. You may not feel like eating at all. Of course, this will affect your blood sugar levels.

Spotting Depression

Spotting depression is the first step. Getting help is the second. If you have been feeling really sad, blue, or down in the dumps, check for these symptoms:

- Loss of pleasure
You no longer take 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, including during the day.
- Early to rise
You wake up earlier than usual and cannot get back to sleep.

- Change in appetite
You eat more or less than you used to, resulting in a quick weight gain or weight loss.
- Trouble concentrating
You can't watch a TV program or read an article because other thoughts or feelings get in the way.
- Loss of energy
You feel tired all the time.
- Nervousness
You always feel so anxious you can't sit still.
- Guilt
You feel 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.
- Suicidal thoughts
You feel you want to die or are thinking about ways to hurt yourself.

If you have three or more of these symptoms, or if you have just one or two but have been feeling bad for two weeks or more, it's time to get help.

Getting Help

If you are feeling symptoms of depression, don't keep them to yourself. First, talk them over with your doctor. There may be a physical cause for your depression.

Poor control of diabetes can cause symptoms that look like depression. During the day, high or low blood sugar may make you feel tired or anxious. Low blood sugar levels can also lead to hunger and eating too much. If you have low blood sugar at night, it could disturb your sleep. If you have high blood sugar at night, you may get up often to urinate and then feel tired during the day.

Other physical causes of depression can include the following:

- 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, your doctor will most likely refer you to a specialist. You might talk with a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse, licensed clinical social worker, or professional counselor. In fact, your

doctor may already work with mental health professionals on a diabetes treatment team.

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

- Psychotherapy, or counseling
- Antidepressant medication

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy 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. You should be sure you feel at ease with the therapist you choose.

Medication

If medication is advised, you will need to consult with a psychiatrist (a medical doctor with special training in diagnosing and treating mental or emotional disorders). Psychiatrists are the only mental health professionals who can prescribe medication and treat physical causes of depression.

If you opt for trying an antidepressant drug, talk to the psychiatrist and your primary care provider about side effects, including how it might affect your blood sugar levels. Make sure that the doctors will consult about your care when needed. Many people do well with a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

If you have symptoms of depression, don't wait too long to get help. If your health care provider cannot refer you to a mental health professional, contact your local psychiatric society or psychiatry department of a medical school, or the local branch of organizations for psychiatric social workers, 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.

Source: <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/mental-health/depression.html>