

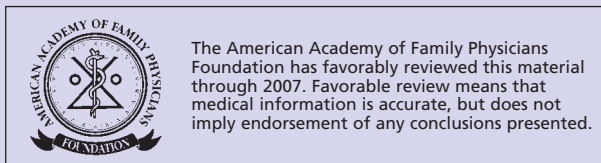
Diabetes and Stress

Coping with
stress in your life





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The American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation has favorably reviewed this material through 2007. Favorable review means that medical information is accurate, but does not imply endorsement of any conclusions presented.

The *Keeping Well With Diabetes* patient education materials were developed using information from the following sources: The American Association of Diabetes Educators, The American Diabetes Association, The American Dietetic Association, and The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists. These booklets do not replace the advice of your healthcare provider. Be sure to consult your healthcare provider regarding your individual diabetes treatment plan.

What is stress?

Stress is that feeling of tension that comes from being under physical or mental strain or pressure. Being unable to cope at work or frequent illness are only two examples of how stress affects our lives. Stress is part of life, but people with diabetes face special challenges with stress because it can affect their blood glucose levels.

This booklet will help you understand:

- How stress and blood glucose levels affect each other
- What makes diabetes stressful at times
- About different types of stress
- About stress and your emotions, and
- Ways to cope with stress and emotions



Stress and blood glucose levels

Stress causes the body to release extra glucose into the bloodstream. This new supply of glucose boosts energy to help you cope with stress. However, this extra glucose can create more stress in people with diabetes by affecting their blood glucose levels.

The stress of diabetes

Diabetes can cause unpredictable problems at times. Managing diabetes usually means making major changes in your daily life, such as taking medicine and altering your eating and exercise habits. Adjusting to these changes and following your diabetes treatment plan every single day can be stressful. However, learning to control the stress of diabetes and other stress in your life is important for your physical and emotional health.



Stress in your personal life

Stressful events unrelated to your diabetes may affect how you feel and how well you cope with diabetes. For example, the stress of having a quarrel or a bad day at work could make your blood glucose soar. Or, getting upset could make you forget to eat a meal or to take your diabetes medicine.



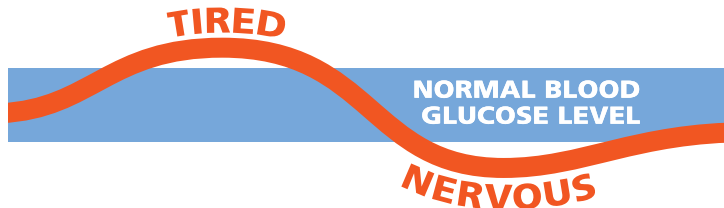
Try to determine what is causing stress in your life. Then talk to your diabetes-care team. They can help you manage diabetes-related stress.

It is also important not to react to stress in ways that might be harmful to your health or your blood glucose levels. Two examples of negative reactions to stress are smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

Diabetes, stress, and your emotions

Over time, most people with diabetes adjust quite well. Even so, you will have both good days and bad days. The stress of diabetes and changes in your blood glucose levels can affect your mood and emotions. Sometimes you may feel:

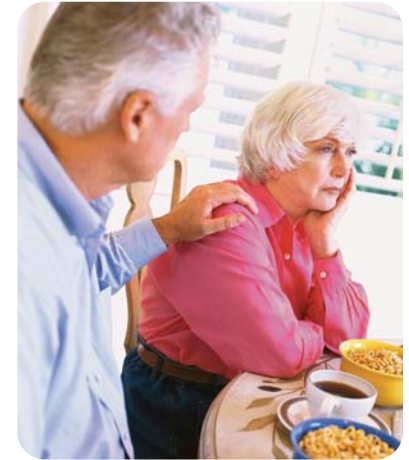
- Angry that you have diabetes
- Frustrated that you must change your life because of it
- Afraid that you won't be able to cope
- Worried about managing your diabetes and about possible complications



Blood glucose changes can also cause stress. High blood glucose levels can make you feel tired or depressed. Low blood glucose levels can make you feel irritable or nervous.

Diabetes and depression

The relationship between diabetes and depression is unclear. However, depression tends to occur more often in people with diabetes than in the general population. Feeling “blue” or discouraged now and then is normal but prolonged feelings of sadness or low self-esteem are not.



Common symptoms of depression include trouble sleeping, an inability to concentrate, and loss of appetite. If you have any of these symptoms for more than a few weeks, tell your healthcare provider. If there's no physical cause for your depression, your healthcare provider may refer you to a mental health professional. Counseling, especially when combined with medicine, can provide effective relief from depression for most people.

What can I do to cope with stress?



You can't escape stress in your life, but you can control how you handle it. Accepting the fact that you have a lifelong medical condition is the first step in managing the stress of diabetes.

Staying as healthy as possible will make it easier to cope. Try to get plenty of sleep, eat right, exercise regularly, take your medicine as

prescribed, and find some time every day for yourself. Even a half-hour spent talking with a good friend or reading a magazine can brighten your mood and relieve stress.

Plan each day if you can. Be prepared for times of high or low blood glucose that may occur even when you follow your diabetes treatment plan. This will help you feel more relaxed and in control.

What steps can I take to ease stress?

When you find yourself in a stressful situation or start to feel tense, sit down, close your eyes, and take a few slow, deep breaths. Try to spend 10 to 20 minutes several times a week practicing breathing deeply. Sit with your eyes closed, focusing only on your breathing or something pleasant, and clear your mind of stressful thoughts.

Laughter is a great stress buster. A good sense of humor will lighten your spirits and make stress more manageable.



Other ways to reduce stress include:

- Exercise
- Watch a movie
- Read a book
- Visit friends
- Take a nap
- Listen to music

Reaching out for support

Don't try to always manage your diabetes alone. Ask a family member or friend for support, especially on extra-stressful days. Also, consider joining a support group



for people with diabetes. If you feel stress and negative emotions are getting the upper hand, seek advice from a mental health counselor.

What have I learned?

From reading this booklet, you have learned how stress can interfere with your well-being and various ways to cope with stress and negative emotions. Managing the stress in your life will help you manage your blood glucose levels and get more enjoyment out of each day.

Keeping Well With Diabetes

We're pleased to offer you this booklet as part of the *Keeping Well With Diabetes* patient education program. But *Keeping Well With Diabetes* can bring you so much more.

When you become a member of *Keeping Well With Diabetes*, a FREE program just for people who take insulin, you'll receive tools and materials that can make a difference in your daily life. Simply complete and return the postage-paid card in this booklet, call 1-800-474-KWWD (1-800-474-5993), or visit our website at www.kwwd.com.

At *Keeping Well With Diabetes* Online, you'll find useful information on living with diabetes, online newsletters, and NovoTrack[®], a unique site that provides you with your own Personal Scorecard to keep track of your diabetes management.



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