

Diabetes + Mental Health Stress: Seeing the Signs & Seeking Treatment

Stress can look and feel like many different things for different people, especially when managing a chronic condition like diabetes. But it's important to understand the difference between normal stress and mental health conditions that might require more support. Take a look at the signs, symptoms, and treatment options below for more information about some common mental health outcomes.

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ANXIETY DISORDER



Description

While everyone experiences some degree of anxiety from time to time, a person with an anxiety disorder feels an inappropriate amount of worry and fear. Needle phobia is one example. Panic attacks are the physical manifestation of anxiety.

Symptoms

- Frequent feelings of impending danger
- Panic attacks may include trembling, sweating, pounding heart, and other physical symptoms

Treatment

- Anxiety disorders should be treated by a qualified mental health professional. Cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness training, and systematic desensitization can be effective.
- Also, look for ways to improve your glucose control, as this may help to reduce symptoms.
- If at any time you have thoughts of harming yourself, call or text the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988.

DEPRESSION



Depression is more than just a bout of the blues and is different from diabetes burnout. Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in usual activities. It affects how you feel, think, and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Less energy
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Difficulty sleeping or excessive sleeping
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Persistent digestive problems that do not ease, even with treatment
- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings
- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm

- Depression isn't a weakness, and you can't simply “snap out of it.” Most people with depression feel better with medication, cognitive behavioral therapy (counseling), or both.
- Find a qualified provider to lead the treatment process, and don't hesitate to try various forms of treatment until you find one that works.
- Also, look for ways to improve your glucose control, as this may decrease depression symptoms.

DIABETES BURNOUT (Also Called Diabetes Distress)



Diabetes burnout is related to how you feel about diabetes and the tasks required to manage it. This doesn't mean you've completely stopped caring for yourself, just that you're really tired of managing diabetes.

- Eating more of the foods that you know mess up your blood sugar levels
- Lying to others about your blood sugar levels
- Intentionally skipping insulin or blood sugar checks
- Intentionally letting your blood sugar run high
- “Winging it” when it comes to insulin doses
- Feeling full of anger or exhausted by diabetes

- Talk to your diabetes care and education specialist about simplifying your management program.
- Break down diabetes management into small, manageable chunks.
- Seek the support of peers.