

Diabetes and Depression

Diabetes is a condition where your body is not managing your blood sugar appropriately. There are two main types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body does not make insulin (a hormone that helps sugar get into your cells to be used for energy). Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes and occurs when the body does not make enough insulin or does not use it very well.

Depression is a condition defined by low mood, a lack of positive thoughts and a loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities that last longer than two weeks.

Patients with diabetes are more likely to have depression than people without diabetes. Depression may make it difficult to manage diabetes, which could lead to future diabetes complications like heart disease and nerve damage.

Risk

Depression can get in the way of how well you function at work and home, including taking care of your diabetes. If diabetes and depression are not treated properly, it can lead to future complications. It is very important to take your medications on time and as prescribed to help prevent complications.

Diabetes

High blood sugar can cause complications, such as heart disease, nerve pain, kidney issues, foot problems and eye damage.

Depression

Depression may cause serious, long-lasting symptoms and often disrupts a person's ability to perform routine tasks. People with depression may no longer be interested in their family, job or hobbies they used to enjoy.

Things you can do

- Make sure you are seeing a specialized doctor, called an endocrinologist, who has a good understanding of your diabetes.
- Ask your doctor for recommendations for a mental health counselor who focuses on chronic health conditions.



- If you are worried about the cost of your medicines, ask your pharmacist or doctor if they know about any programs that can assist with cost.
- Pick a couple diabetes goals to focus on at a time. Don't try to fix everything at once.
- Join a diabetes support group and talk with other people who have diabetes. Your doctor may know of groups available in your community.
- Ask your doctor to recommend a diabetes educator for additional support.

Medication

Taking your medications correctly is an important part of treating diabetes and depression. Talk with your pharmacist about ways to remember to take your medications.

Diabetes

Diabetes can be managed by a number of medications that help control your blood sugar. Blood pressure medications may be prescribed even if you do not have high blood pressure because these medicines can help protect your kidneys. A cholesterol medication called a statin may also be prescribed even if you have normal cholesterol levels because statins help to lower your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

Depression

The goal of treatment is to decrease symptoms and improve quality of life. There are many different medications to treat depression. If your current medication is not working, speak to your provider about other options.

Some symptoms may improve within the first few weeks of treatment, but it may take up to 4–8 weeks to see the full benefit of the medicine. It is important to continue taking the medicine as directed by your doctor or health care provider because suddenly stopping the medicine can cause withdrawal symptoms and is unsafe.

Monitoring

Diabetes

Many people with diabetes aim to keep their blood sugar at normal levels. You may need to self-test your blood sugar regularly. Your provider will also measure your A1c, which is an indicator of your blood sugar levels over the past 3 months.

In addition to regular monitoring of A1c, patients with diabetes should receive:

- Eye exams
- Kidney monitoring



- Blood pressure screening
- Foot exams
- Dental exams

Depression

It is important for people taking antidepressants to have regular check-ups, especially when they first start taking them. Some people may have negative reactions like nervousness or even suicidal thoughts. Contact your provider if symptoms get worse or if you experience suicidal thoughts.

If you feel like you might hurt yourself, go to the emergency room, contact your provider, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988 or visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Diabetes and mental health. https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/living-with/mental-health.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/mental-health.html
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 10 TIPS for Coping with Diabetes Distress. https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/articles/10-tips-coping-diabetes-distress.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/diabetes-distress/ten-tips-coping-diabetes-distress.html
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Diabetes. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/index.html>
4. American Diabetes Association (ADA). <https://www.diabetes.org/>
5. Mayo Clinic. Diabetes. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/symptoms-causes/syc-20371444>
6. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease (NIH). What is Diabetes? <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/what-is-diabetes>
7. American Psychiatric Association (APA). What Is Depression? <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>
8. Mayo Clinic. Depression (major depressive disorder). <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007>
9. National Institute of Mental Health (NIH). Depression. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>