

Diabetes and Stress



Did you know?

Stress and diabetes are connected. A new diagnosis of diabetes or difficulty managing your existing diabetes can lead to stress. Stress can also increase your blood sugar levels. At times, this may seem like a never ending cycle.

Flight or fight response

Stress hormones cause extra sugar to be released into the blood. When we feel stressed, our bodies need extra energy (sugar) to either fight the problem or escape from it.

Top tips to help you manage stress levels:

- 1. Identify and address the problem** if you can. If it is something that can be dealt with, don't put it off. Try to identify the cause of the stress and think of at least 1 solution to the problem. Sometimes thinking of a solution is enough to make you feel better.
- 2. Make a to do list.** It can be difficult to relax when we keep thinking about all the tasks we have to complete. Take the time to make a to do list, or organize a day planner, so you can put your thoughts on paper and give your mind a break.
- 3. Set realistic goals:** Start with small goals and celebrate small victories. Avoid setting goals for yourself that may not be possible for you to achieve. If you don't accomplish a goal – just re-evaluate and start again.
- 4. Find someone you can talk to:** Share your feelings with a spouse, a family member or a friend. It is easier to cope together. Consider joining a Diabetes Support Group.
- 5. Make time for yourself.** Even if only for 15 minutes, do something just for you each day. Schedule this in and prioritize it, like you do with your other appointments.
- 6. Exercise:** Daily exercise is clinically proven to reduce stress levels. Start slowly and increase gradually with a goal of 150 minutes per week of aerobic exercise. Pick something that you enjoy doing for double the benefits.
- 7. Follow a healthy, balanced diet:** Take a little bit of time on the weekend to grocery shop and prep healthy meals and snacks – this will help to reduce stress during the week. A balanced diet has been shown to positively affect mood.
- 8. Embrace humour:** Laughter helps to reduce stress and tension. Make some time to watch a comedy show, or have a laugh with an old friend.
- 9. Make a joy list:** Write down the things that make you smile in life and review this when you're feeling down or overwhelmed.
- 10. Let us help with financial stress:** if your stress is related to finances, let us help with your diabetes related costs. Diabetes can be expensive, but there are several support programs available – talk to your Diabetes Educator about one that might work for you.

Stress Management Resources

Websites

American Heart Association:

www.heart.org

- Click on 'Healthy Living'
- 'Stress Management'

Mind your Mind:

www.mindyourmind.ca

- Click on 'Wellness'
- #bethinkfull Stress Relief tips
- Deep Relaxation Techniques
- Quick Stress Relief

Diabetes Canada:

www.diabetes.ca

- Click on 'Diabetes and You'
- 'Healthy Living Resources'
- 'Heart Health'
- 'Stress Management'

Heart & Stroke Foundation:

www.heartandstroke.ca

- Click on 'Get Healthy'
- 'Stress'
- 'More on reducing stress'

Free Smartphone apps

Breath:

Instructions and exercises in diaphragmatic breathing, with detailed information on the effects of stress on the body.

Pacifica:

Guided deep breathing and muscle relaxation exercises, daily anti-anxiety activities, other tools including a mood tracker.

Happify:

A brain-training app that focuses on fighting negativity, anxiety and stress, while promoting gratitude and empathy..

YogaAcademy:

A library of yoga poses and downloadable yoga and meditation classes (between 5 and 60 minutes, from beginner to advanced).

5 Minute Yoga:

Images for various beginner yoga poses with a 5 minute timer, to allow you to do these simple exercises quickly during the day.