

Diabetes and Stress

Dealing with stress is an important skill for people who have diabetes. The combination of high stress and diabetes can lead to serious physical problems. Learning to deal well with stress can help you stay healthy.

What Is Stress?

Stress is a reaction to a change or problem. Many people feel stress as being anxious, tense, or threatened. Stress can come from a physical change or strain, like having an injury or illness. It can also come from emotions such as being upset, angry or worried.

Stress is a part of everyone's life. Each day there are small stresses like being stuck in traffic or misplacing your keys. At some time we will all have large stresses, like the death of someone close or the loss of a job. Even good changes like buying a house or having a baby can cause stress.

How Your Body Reacts To Stress

When you feel stressed, your body releases hormones that speed up your heart, tense your muscles, and raise your blood pressure and blood glucose (sugar).

In old times this "flight or fight" response helped people to act quickly against a physical threat. For example, if a person encountered a wild animal, the stress response helped him to fight it or run away.



In modern times, most stresses in life are probably not physical threats. Today, the "fight or flight" response might help you stay focused and alert so you can deal with stresses that last a short time, like taking an exam or giving a speech. But, it won't help you deal with most long-term stresses.

The stress response can cause high blood glucose and high blood pressure in people who have diabetes. If these high levels last for a long time they can cause severe damage to the body. High stress can also make it hard for you to do things that keep your body healthy. When feeling stressed some people overeat or do not eat at the right times. Others might stop exercising, smoke or turn to alcohol or drugs. All of these can damage your health.

How You Can Cope With Stress

You can never get rid of all stress. But you can learn to cope with stress in positive ways. You might try some of the following suggestions:

- Learn relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, tai chi, yoga or meditation. To be able to do these techniques properly and effectively, it is best to learn from someone who has experience teaching them.
- Ask friends and family for support and accept it when it is offered.
- Stay as healthy as possible. It takes some effort to eat right, exercise regularly, sleep enough, and take your medication as you should, but it is effort well spent. Neglecting your health will only cause more stress.

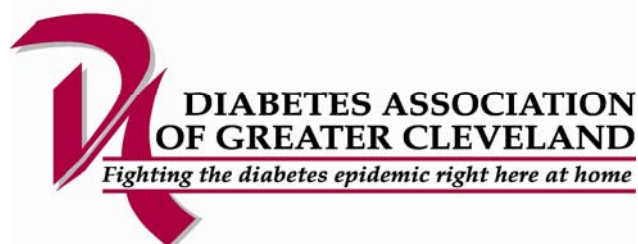


- Take time to do something you enjoy. Watch a movie, listen to music, take a walk in a park, read a book, or visit with friends.
- Join a support group, where you can talk to other people who have similar experiences.
- If you are having money problems, speak with your doctor about low-cost choices for your medications. Also, major drug companies have programs to help people with low income get their products at lower cost.

If you continue to have high stress after trying the above suggestions, you might consider getting advice from a mental health counselor. This is especially important if stress is interfering with your normal life responsibilities, or with your diabetes care. Learning to deal with the stress in your life will help you manage your diabetes and stay healthy.

Where to learn more?

Visit our website: www.dagc.org and our Aronoff Library and Resource Center, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.



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