

Depression

and diabetes

What is depression?

- Depression is not just a low mood but a serious illness.
- People with depression find it hard to do normal activities and function from day to day.
- Depression has serious effects on physical as well as mental health.

How is depression different from sadness?

A person may be depressed, if **for more than two weeks**, they have:

- felt sad, down or miserable most of the time OR
- lost interest or pleasure in most of their usual activities **and**
- experienced symptoms in **at least three** of the following four categories:

Behaviour

- Stopped going out
- Not getting things done at work
- Withdrawn from family and friends
- Relying on alcohol and sedatives
- Stopped doing things they enjoyed
- Unable to concentrate

Thoughts

- "I'm a failure"
- "It's my fault"
- "Nothing good ever happens to me"
- "I'm worthless"
- "Life is not worth living"

Feelings

- Overwhelmed
- Guilty
- Irritable
- Frustrated
- Unhappy
- Indecisive
- Disappointed
- Miserable
- Sad/tearful

Physical

- Tired all the time
- Sick and run down
- Headaches and muscle pains
- Churning gut
- Sleep disturbance
- Poor appetite/weight loss

Are there links between depression and diabetes?

Research indicates there are strong links between depression and diabetes. Depression is very common - one in five people will have depression at some time in their adult lifetime. For people who live with diabetes this figure is even higher.

- Research shows that having diabetes **more than doubles the risk of developing depression**. Living with a chronic illness like diabetes, coping with biological and hormonal factors plus needing to manage the condition may increase the risk of depression, along with the threat of developing complications such as damage to the eyes (retinopathy), nerves (neuropathy) and kidneys (nephropathy).
- Conversely, depression can **double the risk of developing type 2 diabetes**. This may be due to elevated stress hormones and weight gain as people with depression are often inactive.
- Depression can also increase the likelihood of **developing diabetes complications**. People with depression may find it hard to deal with everyday tasks. Over time, managing diabetes (regular blood glucose testing, taking medication, following a healthy eating plan and needing to do regular physical activity) can take its toll. This may increase a person's risk of depression, which may in turn lead to their usual diabetes care being neglected.

Can depression be treated?

There is a range of effective treatments for depression. However, depression must first be recognised and diagnosed in order for it to be treated. Treatments include:

- medication to relieve the physical symptoms of depression
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) to learn to identify and change negative thinking patterns
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) to assist with the acceptance of having a chronic illness and the need for long-term treatment, and to improve relationships.

It is important that any current medication for illnesses other than diabetes, including over-the-counter medications and complementary medications, are also reviewed prior to commencing medication for depression. Antidepressant medication can take 7 to 21 days to work effectively and should not be stopped without medical advice.

What are the treatments for people with depression and diabetes?

The treatment for depression and diabetes involves a coordinated approach that monitors both diabetes control and the symptoms of depression. It is about finding **the treatment that works best for each person**. For example, people with diabetes and mild depression may find that regular physical activity improves depressed moods and also helps with blood glucose control.

The most effective treatments are those that combine psychological and medical care, medical monitoring, individualised diabetes education and adequate community support.

Your doctor or treating health professional will take into account several factors when suggesting the most suitable treatment for you. Regular contact with and ongoing assessment by your doctor to check that your treatments are working effectively is an important part of becoming and staying well.

What can I do to help myself?

If you suspect you might have depression, take control of your health by:

- going to a doctor or other health professional
- getting involved in social activities
- engaging in regular moderate physical activity
- learning about depression and diabetes
- eating healthily and including a wide variety of nutritious foods
- achieving and maintaining healthy weight
- limiting your alcohol intake
- getting help, support and encouragement from family and friends
- asking your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose levels.

Where can I get help?

If you or someone you know needs help, talk to your doctor or other health professional about getting the right advice and support. For further information contact:

- Diabetes Australia on 1300 136 588 or visit their website www.diabetesaustralia.com.au for information about diabetes.
- beyondblue at www.beyondblue.org.au, phone 03 9810 6100 or email bb@beyondblue.org.au for information about depression, the effective treatments available and how to help someone.
- Black Dog Institute on 02 9382 4530, visit their website www.blackdoginstitute.org.au or email blackdog@unsw.edu.au.
- Lifeline's Just Ask Information Line 1300 13 11 14.
- Go For Your Life website: www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au for suggestions and social support.

Diabetes Australia and SANE Australia have developed a booklet on depression and mental illness specifically for people with diabetes. To order a copy of 'The SANE Guide to Good Mental Health for people affected by diabetes', call 1300 136 588 or go to diabetesaustralia.com.au and complete the 'Request a Resource' form.

Other recommended websites

About depression:

www.ybblue.com.au
(beyondblue's youth website)
www.moodgym.anu.edu.au
www.bluepages.anu.edu.au
www.dfordepression.com
www.infrapsych.com
www.nimh.nih.gov

About diabetes:

www.diabetescounselling.com.au
www.health.gov.au/pq/diabetes



beyondblue
the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au

This information sheet was jointly developed by Diabetes Australia and *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*.

Would you like to join Australia's leading diabetes organisation?

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For more information phone 1300 136 588

Website: www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

Multilingual information: www.multilingualdiabetes.org.au

This information sheet was reviewed by Diabetes Australia's Health Care & Education Committee (HCEC) in April 2006 and is endorsed for publication until April 2008. Do not distribute after this date.

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