

MEDIA RELEASE

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GUIDING THE WAY: DEALING WITH DIABETES AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Diabetes Australia and SANE Australia today launched an Australian-first, a guide to help the nearly 1 million Australians diagnosed with diabetes maintain good mental health.

More than 30% of people with diabetes are thought to also have a mental illness such as depression or anxiety.

The booklet, *The SANE Guide to Good Mental Health for people affected by diabetes*, explains the relationship between diabetes and mental health and what people can do to look after themselves. This represents an exciting new collaboration between SANE and Diabetes Australia, and was developed with valuable input from the team at Diabetes Counselling Online.

Diabetes Australia National President, Dr Gary Deed, says 'The launch of this booklet comes at a time when people with diabetes are twice as likely to experience depression or anxiety compared to people who do not have diabetes.'

The pressure of living with a chronic disease can impact on mental health and a person's capacity to cope with daily life.

'It's important to convey the message to people living with diabetes that depression is just like any other illness, it can be treated,' Dr Deed said.

SANE Australia Executive Director Barbara Hocking says 'SANE has developed this series of Guides to Good Mental Health as we want people with a chronic condition to know help is available for mental health problems and be more aware of prevention, early intervention, treatments and support services.

'At the end of the day this is a win-win situation as we know that when depression and anxiety are treated, people are better able to manage their underlying chronic health condition,' Ms Hocking said.

With personal accounts and easy-to-understand explanations of how treatments for these conditions may help, the guide also provides tips for family and friends supporting people with diabetes and depression/anxiety.

Alli Milnes, 34, knows exactly how diabetes can impact on mental health. Since being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as an eight-year-old, she has dealt with lifestyle changes and challenges – including being diagnosed with depression after the onset of anorexia as a teenager.

'It's often hard to help people understand about my diabetes, what it is and what I need to do to manage it. I'm very cautious and unsure about who I tell about my depression, people's reactions can be frustrating and often uninformed,' Alli said.

'Education is the key part of helping people understand about diabetes, which is why the guide is ideal; it covers a lot of areas and gives information that will help make people a lot more aware about diabetes and mental health,' she said.

If you would like a copy of the guide, go to the Diabetes Australia website and fill in the 'Request a Resource' Form under Information Resources or call (02) 6232 3800. For more information about mental illness, visit www.sane.org or contact the SANE Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263)

Fast facts

- Australians currently diagnosed with diabetes..... approx.890,000
- Estimated total number of Australians with diabetes and pre-diabetes..... 3.2 million
- Number of Australians developing diabetes every day..... 275
- Treatment for depression/anxiety includes psychological therapy, medication and community support
- Half of all Australians living with a chronic health condition experience depression or anxiety
- This rate of mental illness is two times greater than for the general population
- Diabetes is Australia's fastest growing chronic disease and is the sixth leading cause of death
- People living with a chronic health condition are more vulnerable to depression/anxiety, but treatment of a mental illness can improve underlying health condition
- Mental illnesses are treatable and the vast majority recover well

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