

Having the Blues

Everyone has the blues now and then. It's common to feel down when there is a lot of stress in your life, you have money or other worries, or bad things happen to you or your family. Some people feel blue just thinking about diabetes and trying to manage it.

You have probably learned how to handle your down days. You may ask others for support, practice ways to cope with stress, solve the problems that can be solved or practice your religion. Taking care of your diabetes can also help. People with type 2 diabetes who have blood sugars closer to normal levels report feeling more zest for living and a better quality of life.

Is it depression?

But sometimes feeling down is more than just the blues—it may be clinical depression. Depression is about twice as common among people with diabetes. Clinical depression is more than feeling sad. It is a serious condition that can have long-term effects on both your quality of life and your health.

People have different symptoms of depression. Some find they aren't hungry at all, while others eat to feel better. Some people sleep all of the time, while others find that they toss and turn. It is also common to withdraw from family and friends or stop doing things you enjoy.

How does depression affect my diabetes?

When you are stressed or depressed, your body releases hormones. These hormones can raise blood sugar and have other negative effects on your body. In addition, some people who are depressed neglect taking care of their diabetes. They just don't have the energy to take medicines, check their blood sugar levels, and be more active. They find it's all they can do to just get through the day. All of these make it harder to manage diabetes, which can add to guilt and depression. It becomes a vicious cycle.

What can I do?

The good news is that depression can be treated. Medicines and counseling are both effective for treating depression, and people who get the best results use both. Once depression begins to improve, many people find that they are more able to take care of their diabetes. Their blood sugar levels improve and they feel better emotionally and physically.

Depression isn't always obvious. The people in your life and your health care team may not know you are struggling if you don't tell them. Even if they don't ask, talk with your health care team about any symptoms of depression. Feeling depressed is not a sign of weakness or a reason to feel ashamed. Letting your health care team know about your feelings is the first step to getting treatment and starting to feel like yourself again.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have you been sad and down most of the time for two weeks or more?
2. Have you lost interest in things that you used to enjoy?
3. Have you lost or gained a lot of weight?
4. Are you eating more or less than usual?
5. Have you had trouble sleeping or are you sleeping too much?
6. Have you had trouble making decisions or focusing on things?

Ask your doctor or nurse the following questions:

1. I am feeling very sad all of the time. Could I have clinical depression?
2. Are there medicines that can help my depression?
3. Can you refer me to a mental health counselor who can help me cope with diabetes or with my depression?

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