

# Diabetes Distress

"I'm tired of being sick all the time."

"Nothing I do works"

"I'm taking these pills, but they aren't doing anything for me, why do I bother?"

The list of responsibilities for a person with diabetes may feel overwhelming. At times, checking blood glucose, taking medications, exercise, counting carbs, and cooking up healthful meals can get to be a bit too much. The feeling of burden or defeat that may show up in your life with diabetes is called **diabetes distress**. Doctors are just beginning to understand this condition and how it affects your health and well-being. **The goal** is to find ways to **overcome** these **negative emotions**.

## It's More Than Worry

You may wonder if anyone understands how tough it is to have diabetes.

Diabetes distress is hard because it overlaps with several related conditions, including depression, anxiety, and stress. It can be hard to distinguish one from another.

Diabetes distress often feels like worry, frustration, concern, and maybe a bit of burnout and can be related to concerns about getting proper treatment or communicating well with your doctor or health team.

Up to half of people with diabetes will experience diabetes distress. And, people with higher distress levels are more likely to develop high blood glucose. Poor emotional and physical well-being are linked to poor health outcomes.

When trying to determine if diabetes distress is likely to cause health problems or prevent people from taking their medication.

## Test for Distress

### There are four general areas

The **first** is "**regimen distress**," the distress of having to do the diet, manage the exercise, take the medications, etc."

The **second** focuses on **worries or concerns about the future** with diabetes and the possibility of developing complications.

The **third** focuses on whether a person is **worried about the quality** of care he or she is getting from doctors and the cost of that care.

The **fourth** is when folks think people with diabetes are blamed for developing their disease because they ate too many sweets. That negative belief can cause "**social burden**."

Diabetes distress is also common among caregivers. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can be dramatic, frequent, and sudden, especially for people with type 1. Since people with both type 2 and type 1 can experience hypoglycemia, fears can be real. It can lead to concerns about driving and other activities. Those fears can turn into “diabetes distress.” Diabetes distress can get out of control and it can have consequences.

## Defusing Distress

Here are some things you can do...

It can be helpful to take things one step at a time, rather than trying to conquer many things (exercise, meal plan, and blood glucose monitoring) all at once. Making changes slowly, so as not to get discouraged when you don't see the results you are hoping for.

- \*Speak up and talk about your diabetes, with a health care provider as well as family members and other people with diabetes.
- \*Become aware of negative thoughts and to address them in a helpful manner.
- \*Set appropriate health-improvement goals. "Any progress toward a goal is success."

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## Coping Strategies

### **Accept that you can't control everything.**

Remember it like Diabetes can 'control' you rather than you 'managing' it. It will help keep things in perspective.

### **Look for support from people who can relate.**

Waking in the middle of the night frequently to test your blood sugar or awaken to check on your loved one may qualify as diabetes distress. Go online or find a support group to see if others have dealt with the same situation can be a helpful way to work through the things that can bring on distress and find helpful solutions

### **Tap into faith and family.**

Your faith, friends and family in your life can be a big comfort over the years.

Source: <http://www.diabetesforecast.org/>

