



DIABETES CARE

Can Stress & Anxiety Cause Diabetes?

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Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives that can result in worry, anxiety, and tension. Stress affects everyone to some degree, but it may be more difficult to manage when people learn that they have diabetes.

Diabetes is a relentless disease that requires constant attention, awareness, and decision-making. Diabetes self-management can therefore be demanding, complex and stressful. In fact, it's a wrenching dilemma as diabetes gets you stressed out and the stress worsens your diabetes.

Stress can impact diabetes management

Stress can make it more difficult to control your diabetes. It may throw off your daily routine and can result in wear and tear on your body.

When a person experiences stress, the body reacts by releasing adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream and the respiratory rates increase. The body directs blood to the muscles and limbs, allowing you to fight the situation.

When you have diabetes, your body may not be able to process the glucose released by your firing nerve cells. If you can't convert the glucose into energy, it builds up in the bloodstream, causing the blood glucose levels to rise.

Research on links between stress and diabetes

A new study at the (US) Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center/Ohio State University College of Medicine documents a clear link between the stress hormone cortisol and higher blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes.

In healthy people, cortisol fluctuates naturally throughout the day, spiking in the morning and falling at night. But in participants with type 2 diabetes, cortisol profiles that were flatter throughout the day were shown to have higher glucose levels.

Previous research had shown that stress and depression are two of the major causes of a flatter cortisol profile. These sustained levels of cortisol make it much more difficult to control blood sugar and manage the disease. For this reason, it's so important for people living with type 2 diabetes to find ways to reduce stress.

While the relationship between short-term stress and diabetes can cause temporary blood sugar increases, long-term stresses may expose a person to multiple on-going problems with diabetes.

Ways to reduce stress

Stress relief is therefore a crucial and often overlooked component of diabetes management. Whether it's a yoga class, taking a walk, or reading a book, finding ways to lower your stress levels is important to everyone's overall health, especially for those with type 2 diabetes.

There are many other things you can do to reduce stress. Make sure you take your medications as directed and eat healthy meals. Use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and meditation.

Innovative resources such as Calm, Myspace and FlowVR provide super platforms for guided meditation. Plenty of exercise, in the form of activities that you enjoy, can also effectively reduce stress.

It's also important to share what you are going through with friends and family as talking to someone you trust can help to relieve your stress and perhaps solve those problems. Join a support group, where you may meet people with problems similar to yours and consider seeking out professional help in order to talk about what's troubling you.