
Diabetes Distress

Diabetes distress is an emotional response to the burdens of living with diabetes. Checking blood glucose levels, figuring out what and when to eat, exercising regularly, managing finances, attending medical appointments, and taking the right dose of medication at the right time is a lot to manage. If undetected or ignored, diabetes distress could result in higher blood glucose levels and lead to burnout. Here are some signs or symptoms of diabetes distress and healthy coping tips.

Signs or Symptoms

- Feeling angry about diabetes diagnosis
- Feeling frustrated or overwhelmed with managing diabetes daily
- Unmotivated to make self-management changes
- Skipping doctor appointments
- Not checking blood glucose levels
- Regularly making unhealthy food choices
- Feeling isolated and alone

Healthy Coping Tips

Acknowledge your feelings. Feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and worried is normal. Everyone feels this way from time to time but if these feelings don't go away or are negatively impacting self-management behaviors or quality of life, it is time to make some changes or ask for help.

Focus on self-care behaviors. Set small, achievable goals. Once one goal has been reached, set another.

Reward yourself. After achieving a goal, reward yourself. A reward can be carving out "me time" to watch a movie, read a book, or play a game. Rewards don't have to cost money.

Create a social support network. Lean on family and friends or join a support group. Telling others how you feel can help relieve stress.

Explore Whole Health. Whole Health is VA's approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you and not what is the matter with you. Approaches like stress reduction, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, nutrition, acupuncture, and health coaching are available.

Contact your healthcare team. Your doctor, nurse, dietitian, or diabetes care and education specialist can help you problem-solve your diabetes concerns. They may also refer you to a health psychologist for additional help.