

# Feeling blue?



## Essential advice for people with diabetes



- ✓ Living with diabetes isn't always straightforward.
- ✓ Depression or 'diabetes burnout' is not uncommon.
- ✓ It can leave you tired, unmotivated, achy and unable to concentrate.
- ✓ But with the right help you can come through it.

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# When diabetes gets you down



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# Diabetes and depression

A lot of people go through a phase when caring for their diabetes becomes a bit much... but the thing to remember is you can come through it.

**Sue Cradock, Diabetes Specialist Nurse**

New treatments, constant testing, clinic visits, other problems....

Living with diabetes isn't always straightforward. It's no wonder that the day-to-day stress of coping with diabetes affects so many people and gets them down.

However, although you didn't choose to have diabetes, you do have a say in how you feel about and deal with your condition.

**This booklet helps to explain what depression and 'diabetes burnout' is, the signs to look out for and how to help beat it.**

# What is depression?

Sometimes nothing can cheer me up - the slightest thing seems to get me down.

**Sarah, 28**

Everyone feels blue or down in the dumps from time to time. However, sometimes these feelings can linger and don't seem to go away. Depression takes all shapes and forms. At its mildest, it makes everything seem harder to do and less worthwhile. At its worst you may feel like giving up on life altogether.



## Why me?

Depression can affect anyone at any age but people with diabetes do seem to be more prone. Nobody really knows why for sure. It may be due to the different blood sugar levels in your body or from having to deal with the daily ins and outs of living with a physical illness such as diabetes.

## Could it be 'diabetes burnout'?

Whether you've had diabetes for years or have been recently diagnosed staying on top of your diet, medication, testing and everything else can be overwhelming. Diabetes burnout is a major and common emotional complication of diabetes. If you feel anxious, stressed or find it difficult to cope you're not alone. Have a chat with your diabetes specialist nurse. It could really make a big difference in helping you set more realistic goals that fit in with your life so you can keep on track of your diabetes.

# What to look out for

Depression and diabetes burnout affects different people in different ways. It may change the way you feel and think or you may develop physical symptoms such as constant aches or pains,

no sex drive or not being able to sleep. Sometimes you may not actually realise how depressed you are, because it comes on so gradually. For others it may strike like a bolt from the blue.

## Mood changes



...I just feel sad all the time but don't really know why - the smallest things either irritate me or make me go into a panic.

**Reena, 24**

## Thought changes



...I can't seem to concentrate on anything - my daughter says I've changed and become really negative.

**Rose, 46**

## Physical changes



...I'm always tired and don't have any get-up and go any more - over-sleeping doesn't help much either.

**Margaret, 62**

## Behavioural changes



...I hardly go out much now - I just can't bring myself to face people.

**George, 41**

# Who can you turn to?

Talking my problems through was the best thing I ever did - just hearing how I felt about everything made me realise what was really bugging me.

**John, 56**

## Your nearest and dearest

Sometimes just talking things over with one or two close friends or relatives who can offer support and reassurance may be enough to get you through a bad patch.

## A different perspective

Some people find being part of a support group or talking to a trained therapist can really help. Realising you're not alone and that there are many other people in a similar position to yourself can make



a big difference. Talk to your diabetes nurse for more information.



## Your doctor

If things don't seem to be getting better, or if you or your family are concerned, your doctor is the most sensible option. He can guide you in the right direction and advise on any appropriate treatment or counselling if necessary. Don't forget you have the right to make an informed choice about any treatment, so ask questions about any prescriptions or therapies you are offered.

# How to help yourself

## Don't bottle things up



...keeping everything inside made me feel even worse - now if I feel sad, I cry, if I feel angry, I shout and if I need to talk I make sure I do.

**Jo, 38**

## Do something



...little things like taking the dog for a walk seemed to work for me - my doc says the extra exercise isn't doing me too bad either.

**Mike, 46**

## Eat well



...it sounds silly but I do feel better when I eat properly - even when I don't really feel like it.

**Raj, 48**

## Resist temptation



...if things got me down I'd turn to chocolate and booze - now I've discovered a new vice which even my nurse approves of - exercise!

**Elaine, 56**

## Take one day at a time



...some days are good, some not so good, but now I've got the diabetes side sorted I feel I can cope more with everything else.

**Jack, 42**

## Do what works best for you

- Don't let depression take over your life
- Look after yourself - exercise and eat well
- Do things you enjoy which make you feel good
- Don't bottle up your feelings
- Ask for help