



Diabetes and your emotions

When you are first diagnosed with diabetes, you will likely feel a wide range of emotions, such as shock, anger, sadness and fear. It is normal to feel this way and to go through several emotional stages as you come to grips with having a chronic disease.

Common feelings about diabetes

Shock/Denial

You may feel overwhelmed, confused and perhaps a bit numb by your diagnosis. You may even pretend that the diagnosis is incorrect and refuse to take any steps to manage the disease. Recognizing that diabetes will play an important role in your life is a major step towards accepting your condition.

Fear/Anxiety

You may be afraid because you don't know very much about diabetes and you are not sure what is going to happen next. Or you may fear the complications of diabetes. You can reduce your anxiety by taking charge of your health, learning about diabetes and understanding how you can postpone or prevent complications.

Anger

You may feel that it's not fair that you have to deal with diabetes; you may resent the lifestyle changes that are an important part of diabetes management. Anger can also be a consequence of low blood glucose levels. Talk to your healthcare professional if anger is interfering with your diabetes management.

Grief

After your diagnosis, you may feel grief similar to that experienced when a loved one dies. You may feel that your life has changed forever, and you mourn the loss of the lifestyle you had before your diagnosis. Having diabetes may make you feel vulnerable or weak, especially if you also have complications of the disease. Talking to someone who understands these feelings – perhaps another person with diabetes or a healthcare professional/counsellor – can help alleviate your grief.

Depression

Although a period of grieving is normal with the diagnosis of any chronic disease, prolonged sadness may be a sign of depression. Depression is twice as common in people with diabetes as in the general population, and it is also associated with poorer blood glucose management, health complications and decreased quality of life.

Talk to your doctor if you continue to feel 'down' for more than a couple of months after your diagnosis or if you have other signs of depression, including feeling tired most of the time, changes in sleeping patterns, changes in eating habits, having trouble making decisions, and feeling hopeless or helpless. Depression can be effectively treated with medication, counselling or both.

Acceptance

Accepting the realities of having diabetes won't happen overnight, or all at once. The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone. Talking to your spouse, a friend, someone else with diabetes or a healthcare professional will help you deal with the ups and downs of your new life with diabetes.

Once you have accepted the realities of diabetes, it will be easier to make lifestyle changes – like increasing your activity level and making healthy food choices – that not only improve your diabetes management but your overall physical and emotional health as well.