

Diabetes Distress: Recognizing and coping with burnout

What is diabetes distress?

Diabetes distress is the name for the emotional stress that is often triggered by managing life with diabetes. Diabetes distress can affect all parts of your daily life, including work, school, relationships, and diabetes control tasks. If diabetes distress is not taken care of, it can lead to **burnout**. This is when a person feels so emotionally tired and defeated by their diabetes that they may give up on taking care of their disease.

7 signs of diabetes distress

- 1 Feeling powerless.** You feel that you will never be able to control your diabetes, no matter what you do. “No matter what I try, my blood glucose (sugar) won’t go down.”
- 2 Worry.** You worry that others will think poorly of you because of your disease. “I have to hide my diabetes from others.”
- 3 Fear of failure.** You are afraid you will disappoint your care team. “I don’t want my doctor to think I can’t take care of my diabetes.”
- 4 Pressure from family and friends.** Those close to you give too much attention to your diabetes. “My family and friends make my diabetes a bigger deal than it is.”
- 5 Fearing “lows.”** You are afraid of having low blood glucose. “It makes me feel miserable.”
- 6 Unsure of what to eat.** You are frustrated by meal planning. “I am not sure if I can eat the foods I enjoy the most.”
- 7 Weary of change.** You are overwhelmed by all the changes you have to make in your life. “It’s a lot of work to manage my blood glucose, medications, food, and exercise changes.”

Are you in distress?

Below are two common feelings that people with diabetes experience. Think about how often these feelings have bothered you **during the past 30 days** and circle the number that matches your experience the best.

I am overwhelmed with the demands of caring for my diabetes.

Not a problem		Sometimes a problem		Always a problem	
1	2	3	4	5	6

I feel like I am often failing with my diabetes care plan.

Not a problem		Sometimes a problem		Always a problem	
1	2	3	4	5	6

Add both numbers together.

Your score is: _____

A score of 6 or higher means that you may have diabetes distress. Talk with your doctor or another member of your diabetes care team about your score and what you can do to begin to feel better.

What can you do?

Use the following tips to reduce the impact of diabetes on your emotional health:

Stop blaming yourself. Diabetes is a hard disease to manage by yourself. That's because it can be hard to get the results you want even when you do all that your care team has asked.

Review and revise your goals. If you feel like you are not achieving your diabetes goals, think about setting 1 or 2 smaller goals. Getting some "easy wins" can help you feel better.

Be kind to yourself. It's hard to take care of yourself when you are feeling down or frustrated. You can help yourself feel better by taking a relaxing bath, treating yourself to a massage, listening to music you enjoy, or taking part in an activity you enjoy.

Get support. Talking things through with others can be a big help. Your diabetes care team can help you with all aspects of your diabetes, including dealing with your feelings. Work with your diabetes care team to make small changes in your diabetes care plan so that it doesn't feel like such a burden.

Questions for my diabetes care team

Where can I learn more?

You are not alone. Diabetes distress affects thousands of people every day. You can learn more about how to successfully manage diabetes distress at the links below:

- [**American Diabetes Association**](#)
- [**BeyondType1.org**](#)
- [**DiatrIBE.org**](#)

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