

# Diabetes and Stress Management



Stress is a natural part of life for everyone. This is a good thing in emergencies. Stress can be good for you by adding energy and excitement to your day-to-day activities. But, too much of any good thing can be bad. Normally, stress causes changes to our emotions and our bodies.

**The changes can be good as well as bad.** The problem is not just the event that caused the change but how you react to it. It is bad when you feel like your body is working overtime and has no place to go. You may feel anxious, afraid, worried or uptight. Each person is different, what is stressful to one person may not cause stress for someone else.

**Stress causes the following physical changes:**

- Blood pressure and heart rate rise
- Breathing rate rises
- Blood sugar rises

These changes can be harmful when you have diabetes.



## Some Symptoms of Stress

- High blood Pressure
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Upset stomach
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Weight gain or loss
- Back and neck pain



Many of the symptoms of stress are the same as other health problems, so make sure to talk with your provider about your symptoms.

# Healthy Ways to Cope With Your Stress



Find some ways to change unhealthy habits into a healthy lifestyle.

## What can I do when I feel stressed?

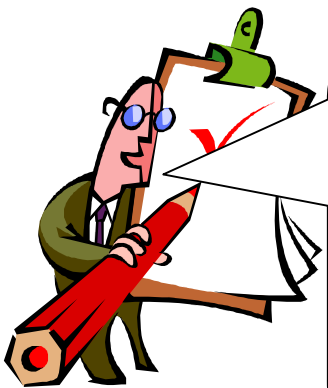
- *Learn your early signs* of when you feel stressed. Usual signs are tension in the shoulders and neck or clenched fists.
- If you cannot avoid the things that cause stress then *change how you react to them*.
- ***Avoid unhealthy coping habits***, check the ones you would try to change.
  - Caffeine
  - Alcohol
  - Nicotine
  - Poor diet
- ***Try positive coping habits*** -- check the ones you would try.
  - Avoid people or things that are negative or make you feel bad
  - Listen to music
  - Read a good book, such as romantic or joke book
  - Work on your favorite hobby
  - Be creative -- Frame pictures, paint some furniture, draw pictures, knit or crochet, write a letter
  - Write your thoughts and feelings down on paper
  - Find someone to share your thoughts with and talk to - this could be your pet
  - Do volunteer work
  - Learn a new skill
  - Learn positive self-talk
  - Try imagery
  - See a positive, uplifting movie
  - Plan a trip or vacation - even if you don't go, it can be fun to plan
  - Walk around the block or your house



## Ideas to prevent stress

Ways to look at life that reduce stress:

- Look at change as a challenge, not a threat
- Do not worry about things you can not change
- Think positive thoughts
- Find out what is truly important in your life
- Keep and/or seek spiritual guidance if you wish



**Check the ideas you would use in your Action Plan.**

- Set realistic goals to help you get control of your life
- Prepare ahead of time for things that may be stressful
- Set time management goals, use your time wisely
- Use good nutrition
- Drink enough fluids
- Have a plan for daily activity
- Include activities you enjoy in your day/week
- Include exercise three times a week
- Get enough sleep
- Take time for yourself
- Develop a strong support system around you
- Tell your feelings to friends and family
- Enjoy a sense of humor
- Seek professional help as needed
- Teach others about diabetes
- Join a support group, attend classes

Other ways to decrease stress:

- Relaxation training - Start with a muscle and hold it tight for a few seconds and then release the muscle. Start at the top of your head and work your way down.
- Stretching - Roll your head in a gentle circle. Reach toward the ceiling and bend from side to side slowly. Roll your shoulders.
- Deep breathing - lay down on a flat surface and take a slow deep breath and hold it for a second, then breathe out slowly.
- Light candles, darken the room and listen to your favorite music.
- Talk to your provider or diabetes teacher about getting help if you cannot handle stress on your own.

**You do not have to handle this problem alone.**



**Here are some Actions  
to pick for your Action  
Plan**

- WHAT you are going to do
- HOW MUCH you will do
- WHEN you will do it
- HOW OFTEN you will do it

Positive coping habits	I will read (what) for 15 minutes every night before bedtime (find a time for yourself activity) For some people, reading the Bible or prayer reduces stress. When I start to feel (what is my stressor) I will (what) my favorite music for (time) 30 minutes
Changing unhealthy habits	I will (what) (when) (how much) for (how long) I will decrease my caffeine by having one less coffee in the morning I will quit drinking caffeine after noon
Preventing stress	I will (what) say no to (what) things that stress me out I will keep my blood sugar normal (when) during the holiday to keep from going to the emergency room. I will practice (what ) deep breathing for 15 minutes three times a week after dinner I will get eight hours of sleep every night
Scheduling	I will plan to eat three meals a day to avoid the stress of high and low blood sugar I will plan my day to allow me to check my blood sugar and write the results down in my log book I will plan a reward (movie, visit with friend, shopping) for one week of diabetes self management success.