

# Depression and diabetes

Depression not only affects your brain and how you act. It affects your whole body. It has been linked with diabetes and other health problems. Dealing with more than one health problem at once can be hard. Getting the right treatment is important.

## What is depression?

Depression is a serious mental illness. It can get in the way of your daily routine and reduce your quality of life. Signs of depression include:

- Feeling sad or hopeless, or unworthy or guilty for no reason.
- Being irritable.
- Loss of interest in or lack of pleasure from favorite activities and/or hobbies.
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Problems focusing, remembering things, or making decisions.
- Having a tough time falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleeping all the time.
- Overeating or losing appetite.
- Lots of aches and pains that do not get better with treatment.
- Thoughts of death and suicide.

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is an illness that affects the way the body uses digested food for energy. Most of the food we eat is broken down into glucose. This is a type of sugar. It is an important source of fuel for the body. It is the main source of fuel for the brain.

The body also makes a hormone called insulin. This helps cells in the body absorb glucose. It uses glucose for energy. Diabetes gets rid of the body's ability to make or use insulin the right way. Glucose builds up in the blood without it. Cells in the body do not get energy when this happens.

## How are depression and diabetes linked?

Diabetes may increase your risk for depression. It may also make existing depression worse. Some symptoms of depression may hurt your overall health. This can increase your risk for diabetes. And this could also make things worse.

For example, eating too much may cause weight gain. Weight gain is a big risk factor for diabetes. Feeling tired or worthless may cause you to ignore a special diet or medicine needed to control your diabetes. This can make your diabetes symptoms worse.

It is important to take care of yourself when you have diabetes. Feelings of depression can make it harder to have the energy to:

- Test your blood sugar.
- Prepare and eat a healthy diet.
- Take your medicines as prescribed.

Poor control of diabetes can cause symptoms that look like depression. High or low blood sugar can make you feel tired or anxious. Low blood sugar can make you hungry and increase your food intake. Low blood sugar at night can cause disrupted sleep.

### How is depression treated in people who have diabetes?

A behavioral healthcare provider treats depression. Treating it can help you manage your diabetes. It can help you improve your overall health too. Some of the most common treatments for depression are.

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**—This is also called “talk therapy.” It helps you change negative thinking that may be a part of your depression.
- **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI)**—This is a type of medicine that increases levels of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin plays a key role in mood, sleep and other body functions.
- **Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI)**—This is a type of medicine that is like SSRI. It helps with depression symptoms such as irritability and sadness.

These treatments are generally safe. But talk with your health care provider about:

- Side effects.
- Whether all your medicines work well together.
- Other treatments.

Treatment does not work the same for everyone. Medicines can take time to work. They may need to be used with therapy. Or they may need to be changed to get the best results.

**If you are in crisis or considering hurting yourself or others, or if someone you know is currently in danger, please dial 911 immediately.**

*This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.*