



Diabetes Life Lines

Managing Stress and Diabetes

Part of life is experiencing stress. You may be feeling frazzled because you cannot find your keys on the way to a big meeting, or you may be struggling to accept a recent diagnosis. It is important to understand stress so that you can recognize and respond to it in a healthy way.

What is stress? There are two main types of stress. The first is routine stress, which is pressure associated with daily responsibilities, family life, or work. The second type of stress is a result of an adverse life event, such as losing a job or divorce. The cause of stress is called a stressor, and everyone responds to stressors differently. Depending on the type of stress and your response, it can last a few hours, days, or weeks at a time. Some ways your body may respond to stress include stomach pains, nausea, headaches, difficulty sleeping or concentrating, and low energy levels¹.

How are stress and diabetes related?

When stress lasts for a long time, called chronic stress, it can contribute to other health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and even diabetes². According to the American Heart Association, women with the highest levels of chronic stress have almost two times the risk of developing diabetes³.

Studies have also shown that people who report greater stress are more likely to have poor blood sugar control over time⁴. Reactions to stress can make self-care and diabetes management more difficult. Poor food choices, little exercise, alcohol use, and difficulty taking diabetes medications are associated with poor blood glucose control and a greater chance of diabetes complications⁴. This is likely to lead to even more stress that may make managing your diabetes a challenge.

How can I manage stress?

A few unhealthy ways of dealing with stress include smoking, alcohol use, emotional eating, avoiding the situation, and withdrawing from family and friends. If you find yourself relying on one or more of these methods, you may need to rethink your stress management practices. Here are a few ideas to help you manage your stress:



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- Stop, breathe, and reflect. If you are facing a stressful situation, start by stopping what you are doing, taking a few deep breaths, and reflecting on ways to solve the problem.
- Develop time management habits. Prioritizing your time can help minimize daily stressors.
- Get regular exercise. The National Institute of Mental Health suggests that just 30 minutes of walking a day can boost your mood².
- Try yoga or meditation to calm your mind and your breathing.
- Make time for your favorite hobby. Spending time doing something you love can give you a break from your stressors, help you to decompress, and lift your mood.
- Stay connected with family and loved ones. Doing so can help you to feel less alone or isolated in your stress. Family and friends can also help offer you support to address stress.
- Try a diabetes support group. Having other people to talk to who don't know you but have similar stressors can help.



If you experience stress that will not go away, are frequently overwhelmed, or find that you are using drugs or alcohol to cope with stress, you may consider seeking help from a health professional. Many mental health providers offer services on what is called a “sliding scale.” This means that the cost of care is lower if you have a lower income. Your doctor can offer you resources or make a recommendation for you.

References:

1. Stress and Heart Health [Internet]. American Heart Association. Available from: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/stress-and-heart-health>
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Prediabetes and the National Diabetes Prevention Program

What is prediabetes?

Diabetes Life Lines talk about lifestyle tips for *diabetes*. But *prediabetes* is a health issue related to diabetes that is also important to talk about. Prediabetes is when blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diabetes. Someone with a fasting blood sugar (taken after not eating for about 8 hours) between 100-125 mg/dL has prediabetes.



<https://www.pharomeasy.in/blog/prediabetes-whats-next-for-your-lifestyle/>

Prediabetes increases the chances that you'll get diabetes later on. That is why it is so important to know about prediabetes so you can prevent getting diabetes down the road.

Risk Factors for Prediabetes

How do you know if you or someone you know has prediabetes or has a high chance of getting prediabetes? Your doctor can use a simple blood test to diagnose prediabetes. But, there are also several things that we know increase the chances of having prediabetes. These include:

1. Being 40 years old or older
2. Being a male
3. If you are a female, having a history of gestational diabetes
4. Having a family history of diabetes
5. Having high blood pressure
6. Not being physically active
7. Being overweight or obese

You can quickly find out if you or someone you know has a high chance of having prediabetes by taking the [prediabetes risk test \(doihaveprediabetes.org\)](https://doihaveprediabetes.org) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Diabetes Association. If you score a 5 or higher on this test, you have a high chance of having prediabetes.

The National Diabetes Prevention Program

So, you or someone you know takes the test and scores a 5 or higher. What now? What can you do to prevent getting diabetes? Thankfully, there is a program available that research has shown to be very effective! This program is called the National Diabetes Prevention Program (or the DPP) and is a CDC-recognized program.

The DPP is a 1-year program that focuses on making doable lifestyle changes. The goal is to keep up a lifestyle that helps you lose weight, eat healthier, and be more physically active. The program includes at least 16 weekly group classes and at least 6 monthly group classes over 1 year. This program was tested in a large research study, and it showed a 58% lower chance of getting diabetes 3 years after the program ended. In other words, this program may help you cut your chance of getting diabetes in half!

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this program, you can find a list of all CDC-recognized DPP providers in Georgia, and their contact information, here:

https://nccd.cdc.gov/DDT_DPRP/Registry.aspx

Some Extension offices also have DPPs going on, so you can contact your local UGA FACS Extension agent to see if they are planning to offer a DPP in your county soon! If not, Extension offers many other programs that can help you improve your eating habits, get more active, and lose some weight. Visit us at extension.uga.edu to find your local office.

Food Label Lingo

Food content claims, like “Low sodium,” or “fat free,” help us know what is in a food. You may see words like “reduced,” “low,” and “good source,” on boxes, bags, and cans. Foods have to meet certain rules for these terms to be on the label. Let us look at some you might see on a label and what they mean!

“Free”

“Free” of a nutrient or calories means that the food does not have that nutrient or only very small amounts. For example, a food labeled “Calorie free” has no calories, or a very small amount (less than 5 calories per serving). Other similar terms you may see are

- “*Fat free,*” “*Saturated fat free,*” “*Trans fat free*” – 0 grams total fat/saturated fat/trans fat or less than ½ gram per serving
- “*Sugar free*” -0 grams sugar or less than ½ gram per serving
- “*Sodium free*” -0 milligrams sodium or less than ½ milligram per serving



“No salt/sugar added”

“No salt added” or “no sugar added,” means that these were not added during the processing or packaging of the food. However, that does NOT mean that the food is sodium or sugar free. The food could have some sodium or sugar that is naturally in the food. Check the nutrition facts label to see if the food has any sodium or sugar!



“Low”

If the label says that the food or drink is “low” in a nutrient or calories, it has just a small amount. For each nutrient it is a different amount to be labeled “low”:

- “*Low calorie*” –40 calories or less per serving
- “*Low total fat*” –3 grams total fat or less per serving
- “*Low saturated fat*” –1 gram saturated fat or less per serving
- “*Low cholesterol*” –20 milligrams cholesterol or less per serving
- “*Low sodium*” –140 milligrams sodium or less per serving
 - “*Very low sodium*” –35 milligrams sodium or less per serving



“Reduced”

If the label says that the food or drink is “reduced” in something, it has at least 25% less of the nutrient or calories than the original version of that item. For example, reduced sodium potato chips would have 25% less sodium than the original version of the chips.

**“Good Source”**

If the label says that the food is a “good source” of something, that means one serving of the food provides 10-19% of the Daily Value (a person’s daily needs for that nutrient) for that nutrient. For example, if a food is a “good source” of calcium, it has 10-19% of calcium needs. Remember, the information on a label in the “Daily Value” column is based on someone who needs 2000 calories per day. You may need more or less than this based on your age, sex, body size, and how much physical activity you do each day.

“High”

If the label says that the food product is “high” in a nutrient, one serving of the food provides 20% or more of a person’s needs for that nutrient, if the person is on a 2,000-calorie diet. For example, if a food is “high fiber,” it contains 20% or more of fiber needs for someone on a 2,000-calorie diet.

Food content claims can be helpful when choosing food products at the grocery store. Use them to make healthier choices to manage your diabetes and live a healthy lifestyle!

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Sweet Potato Custard

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

1 cup mashed, cooked sweet potato
½ cup mashed banana (about 2)
1 cup evaporated skim milk
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
2 beaten egg yolks (or 1/3 cup egg substitute)
½ teaspoon salt (optional)
Nonstick cooking spray
¼ cup raisins
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Directions

1. In a medium bowl, stir together sweet potato and banana.
2. Add milk, blending well. Add brown sugar, egg, and salt; and mix thoroughly.
3. Spray a 1-quart casserole dish with nonstick spray coating. Transfer sweet potato mixture to casserole dish.
4. Combine raisins, sugar, and cinnamon; sprinkle over top of sweet potato mixture.
5. Bake in a preheated 300°F oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

Nutrition Facts per Serving

Calories: 144
Carbohydrates: 19 grams
Total fat: 2 grams
Protein: 6 gram
Sodium: 235 milligrams
Fiber: 1 gram

References:

Adapted from UGA Extension Rite Bite Diabetes Cooking School Recipes

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/indexing/ritebite/vegetables/Italian%20Vegetable%20Salad.pdf>

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Dear Friend,

Diabetes Life Lines is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you the latest information on diabetes self-management, healthy recipes and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours truly,

County Extension Agent

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