

# Since our last class session:

- 1) Were your diabetes medications changed by any healthcare provider?
- 2) Did you had a blood sugar reading  $< 60\text{mg/dL}$ ?

**If so, please share with the instructor or GRA now or privately at end of class.**



## Class Seven

# Emotional Health: A Key Factor in Preventing Diabetes Complications



## Objectives

In this class, you will:

- Discuss why emotional resilience is integral to our diabetes care plan
- Discuss how overworked stress response systems can turn good stress into distress
- Explore the relationship between awareness and acceptance of emotions and diabetes care
- Practice balancing positive and negative emotions and expressing emotions in a healthy way
- Understand short- and long-term diabetes complications
- Discuss how to cope effectively with emotions related to diabetes complications

## Our Emotional Health: A Key Component of Diabetes Care

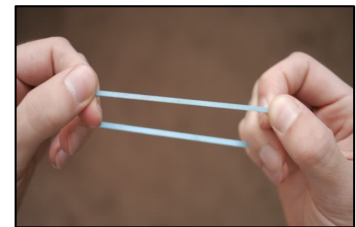
Our emotional health affects how we think and feel about ourselves and others, how we relate to those we love, the choices we make each day, and how we adapt to the stressful situations in our lives. Our emotional health is a key component of our diabetes care plan. Poor emotional health increases our risk for anxiety and depression. It can also make it hard for us to engage in the healthy behaviors needed to manage our diabetes and prevent short- and long-term diabetes complications.

Being emotionally healthy doesn't mean we're happy all the time. It means that we are aware of our emotions and able to cope with life's challenges. We are able to bounce back from setbacks and feel good about ourselves and our relationships with others. We also find it easier to engage in healthy behaviors that improve our diabetes management and to seek the help of family, friends, and health professionals when needed.

## Stress Helps Us Grow – Our Bodies Have an Amazing Stress Response

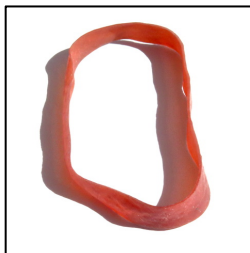
Some stress is good for us. Stress helps us grow stronger. Our bodies have an amazing stress response that mobilizes our ability to cope with stressors – like a rubber band, we can stretch ourselves and then bounce back to 'normal.'

Intermittent stress is normal, in fact, necessary for growth and well-being. Preserving our health when stressed, even an ongoing state of crisis, is within our grasp! We have the ability to weather the storm, like a tree with strong roots whose branches bend and sway in a storm rather than crack under pressure.



## Overworked Stress Response Systems Turn Good Stress into Distress

When our normal stress response systems are activated chronically, our bodies can break down (the rubber band can no longer stretch and bounce back, and instead breaks). Chronic stress impacts diabetes care as prolonged stress is often associated with unhealthy behaviors such as poor sleep or overeating. Stress hormones (cortisol) also increase blood pressure and cause blood sugar to rise. Over time, chronic stress influences short- and long-term diabetes complications.



## Diabetes Distress

It's normal to sometimes feel discouraged, worried, frustrated, or even burned out with taking care of our diabetes. These overwhelming feelings are commonly called *diabetes distress*. The problem with diabetes distress is that it can lead to a sense of despair. Despair saps our motivation to take good care of ourselves, and not taking good care of ourselves can lead to unhealthy habits, such as not checking our blood sugar, not paying attention to the foods we use to fuel our body, and not getting enough physical activity and/or sleep.

Left unchecked, diabetes distress negatively impacts our emotional health and can result in short- and long-term diabetes complications.

The good news is you don't have to strive for perfection. You don't have to be perfect to ensure a healthy A1C and avoid diabetes complications. It's ok to be aware that you're having a bad day and that you reached out for comfort foods to calm down, or the opposite, that you had a great day and reached out for comfort foods to celebrate. Truth is, perfection is overrated and often holds us back from enjoying life and taking good care of our diabetes. Beating yourself up mostly serves to increase diabetes distress rather than lower it. Learn to be gentle with yourself and forgive yourself.



You don't have  
to be perfect to  
be amazing

Those who strive for good health in a positive way take genuine pleasure in caring for their bodies. They let go of perfectionism, which only results in struggles with self-doubt and fears of disapproval and rejection.

## 10 tips for Coping with Diabetes Distress

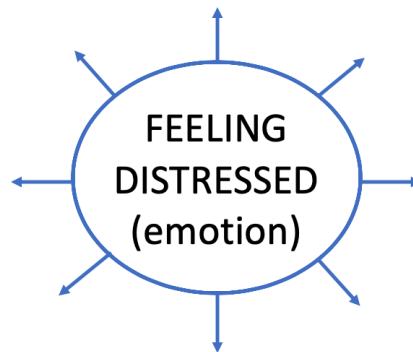
From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

1. Pay attention to your feelings (*we have an exercise for this on the next page*)
2. Talk with your health care providers about your feelings
3. Talk with your health care providers about negative reactions other people may have about your diabetes
4. Ask if help is available for the costs of diabetes medicines and supplies
5. Talk with your family and friends
6. Allow loved ones to help you take care of your diabetes
7. Talk to other people with diabetes and support each other
8. Do one task at a time; this will help you feel less overwhelmed by your 'to do' list
9. Pace yourself
10. Take time to do things you enjoy

## Regulating Emotions When Feeling Distressed

Let’s do an activity to enhance our awareness and ability to cope effectively with feelings of distress. The center of the circle below represents feeling emotional distress (e.g., sad, mad, anxious). The arrows represent how we try to help ourselves calm down – our coping strategies.

When you are feeling overwhelmed/distressed, how do you calm yourself down? For example, some people overeat when distressed. Others eat less. Some people watch TV or go shopping. Some people reach for a beer or glass of wine. For others, work calms them down. Still others might notice they criticize themselves or others. By the arrows, write how you typically try to regulate your emotions when feeling distressed.



## Awareness, Acceptance, and Change – Those Words Go in That Order!

Now that you are aware (and wrote down) how you typically cope when feeling distressed, it is important to be gentle with yourself – to accept that your current ways of coping, even ways of coping you wish to change, help take care of you. Remember, we all care about our health and are doing the best we can. Let’s reflect on the short- and long-term helpfulness of the coping strategies we use in response to feeling distressed. What do you notice? For example, if you notice that when you feel anxious you typically eat to calm down, ask yourself how else might you help yourself calm down?

Feeling	Coping Strategy	Reflection
anxious	go to food	calms me down initially, but doesn’t solve my concern; increases my BG

## Awareness and Acceptance of Emotions Build Self-Confidence

Regulating our emotions and using helpful coping strategies when feeling distressed builds self-confidence. Below are a few helpful ways to help regulate our emotions/enhance our self-confidence.



## To Stay Focused and Motivated... Identify and Write Down Your Goals

We often talk with people who care about taking care of their diabetes, but don't achieve their goals. That's often because they have not thought deeply about what they want and set goals in a way that helps them be successful. Think about it, would you set out on of a trip or vacation with no real idea of your destination? Probably not! The same thing applies to your diabetes care – you need goals and strategies to keep you motivated.

### Identify your goal.

What is it you want? Consider what you want and expect to achieve, and then commit to it.

### Think about why you want to achieve this goal.

What is motivating you? Identifying why you want to achieve a goal allows you to remind yourself later what you are working to achieve.

### Make specific plans now for maintaining your motivation.

Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals to motivate you and write them down. Let's practice!

### Let's Practice Setting a S.M.A.R.T. Goal

This exercise helps identify SMART goals that are important to you. SMART goals help you determine what you want and are motivated to achieve, set realistic deadlines, and succeed! We suggest that goals be made with consultation of your health care provider to ensure they are healthy and realistic.

<b>INITIAL GOAL</b>	Write the goal you have in mind.
<b>S SPECIFIC</b>	What do you want to achieve?
<b>M MEASURABLE</b>	How will you measure progress? Know if you're successful?
<b>A ACHIEVABLE</b>	Do you have the skills, or can acquire them? What steps will you take to achieve the goal? How motivated are you?
<b>R RELEVANT</b>	Why this goal now?
<b>T TIME-BOUND</b>	What's my deadline and is it realistic?
<b>SMART GOAL</b>	Review what you have written, and write a SMART goal.

## Diabetes Short- and Long-Term Complications

Diabetes is a disease that affects the entire body, and unfortunately, there are complications that can arise. It is important to understand how to prevent these complications. There are short-term complications, such as the common cold or flu and other possible infectious diseases, and long-term complications, such as nerve damage, vision loss, heart disease, liver complications, and amputation.

### Short-Term Complications

#### Common Cold, Flu, COVID-19, Pneumonia

Chronic high blood sugar can weaken your immune system and make you more likely to get infections. Even people with diabetes that have well managed blood sugar are at higher risk of serious complications to infections such as the flu and COVID-19. About 30% of adult patients hospitalized for the flu also have diabetes. This is significant as only 10% of the U.S. population has diabetes. *See handout: Diabetes and the flu*

#### Tips to Prevent Infections

- Wash your hands
- Wear a face covering
- Avoid crowds during flu season
- Keep your A1C below 7%
- Get vaccinated for flu and pneumococcal pneumonia

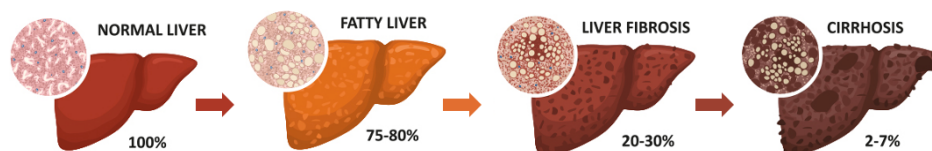
This is why we encourage you to get the pneumococcal pneumonia and seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines. Becoming ill with these infections can make it difficult to control your blood sugar levels. Thus, you will need to take extra care when sick to maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

### Long-Term Complications

Long-term complications involve blood vessel and nerve damage. This damage happens over time, affecting major areas of our bodies, such as our **liver**, our **vascular system**, and our **gums and teeth**.

#### Liver Complications

The liver is the largest internal organ in the body, about the size of a small football. Your liver is a "chemical factory," performing over 500 chemical functions to keep your body running! The liver is just as vital as the lungs, brain, and heart. Unfortunately, liver damage is common in diabetes. Insulin resistance can cause a buildup of fat in the liver, leading to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). About half of the people with diabetes have NAFLD. NAFLD usually does not cause any symptoms; however, if left untreated NAFLD can advance to cirrhosis of the liver. Cirrhosis is when scarring and fibrous tissues form on the liver and keep it from performing its functions. Advanced cirrhosis of the liver is life threatening and may have no symptoms until very advanced. It is important for your health care provider to perform a yearly test to screen for liver disease including a liver enzyme blood test.





# DIABETES AND THE FLU

## What is the flu?

The flu is an illness caused by a virus or germ that infects your nose, throat, and lungs. It can spread easily from person to person.

For most people, the flu is a mild illness that lasts only a few days. But, for people with diabetes, the flu can sometimes cause serious health problems.



## Who needs a flu shot?

Everyone age 6 months or older needs to get a flu shot or vaccine every year.

## Do flu shots cause side effects (problems)?

Most people have no side effects from flu shots. The most common problem is a sore or itchy arm for a day or so where the shot was given. For people who don't like or can't take shots, a nasal spray is also available.

**Remember:** When you get a flu shot, you don't just protect yourself – you also protect everyone around you. For more information, contact your doctor's office or health clinic.



## The signs or symptoms of the flu include:

- Headache
- Fever or chills
- Tiredness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches and pains
- Runny or stuffy nose



## What should I do?

The best way to protect yourself - and others - from the flu is to:

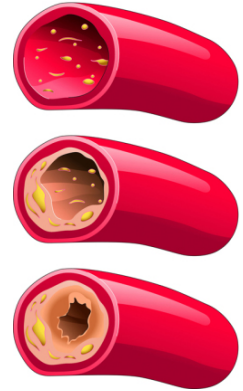
- If possible, get your flu shot before flu season (October through May)
- Get your shot as soon as it becomes available in your area
- Get the hi-dose flu shot if you are over age 65

## Vascular (or Circulatory) Complications

Our vascular system, also called the circulatory system, is comprised of blood vessels (arteries and veins) that carry blood throughout our body. There are two groups of vascular complications – **macrovascular**, which affects our large (**macro**) arteries and veins, and causes damage to the brain, heart, and extremities, and **microvascular**, which affects our small (**micro**) blood vessels, and causes damage to the eyes, kidneys, and nerves.

### Macrovascular Complications – Brain, Heart, and Extremities

Diabetes often occurs in conjunction with elevated cholesterol and triglycerides and high blood pressure. High cholesterol and triglycerides can build up and ‘clog’ your arteries, reducing blood flow and eventually causing blockages. Overtime, this build up can lead to the arteries hardening, making it harder for your heart to pump blood. This progression can result in high blood pressure. High blood pressure can further damage your blood vessels and cause damage to the brain and heart.



### Brain

When the blood vessels of the brain are hardened and clogged (atherosclerosis), blood flow is restricted and the body can no longer get the oxygen needed to function normally. This can lead to transient ischemic attacks or “mini-strokes.” Eventually, a blood clot can form at the site of the clog. When a clot breaks off, it can completely stop blood flow to an area of the brain, which causes a full stroke. A hemorrhagic stroke happens when a blood vessel breaks and bleeds into the brain.

#### Types of human brain stroke



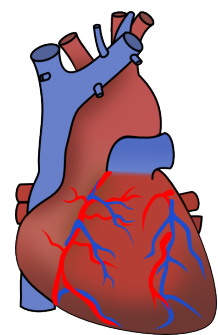
hemorrhagic

ischemic

atherosclerosis

### Heart

A similar process happens in the blood vessels of the heart as in the brain. In the early stages when arteries are partially clogged, it is called cardiac ischemia, and your heart has a harder time working because it has to push blood through a smaller space. In the heart, a blood clot can also form at the site of the clog. When this clot breaks off it causes a myocardial infarction, also known as a heart attack. Many people survive a heart attack, but eventually they may end up with congestive heart failure where the heart cannot pump as efficiently as it did in the past.



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## Extremities – Arms and Legs

Peripheral vascular disease occurs when the large blood vessels outside the heart and brain narrow. This usually causes the legs to look discolored and shiny. Early symptoms can include mild leg pain, trouble walking, and tingling in the legs. If the symptoms progress, the blood supply is not bringing the nutrients needed to heal the body's tissue, which can lead to ulcers. Ulcers, typically starting in the feet, can become gangrenous and amputation may be required.

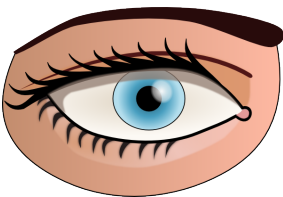


## Microvascular Complications – Eyes, Kidneys, and Nerves

Your body has millions of tiny blood vessels that are responsible for getting oxygen to your body's cells. With diabetes the blood cells are bigger and stickier because they are covered with sugar. The enlarged, sticky blood cells have a hard time getting through the tiny blood vessels. Over time, the tiny blood vessels can leak and/or burst. Chronic high blood pressure adds additional strain on your tiny blood vessels making the situation worse.

## Eyes and Diabetic Retinopathy

Chronic high blood sugar can damage the very tiny blood vessels that nourish the different parts of your eye. This can go on for a long time before affecting your vision; however, damage can be detected in the early stages during yearly eye exams.



It is important to have yearly eye exams so that concerns can be caught early and treated. It cannot be reversed but it can be stopped where it is!!!

### Diabetic Retinopathy

#### Symptoms

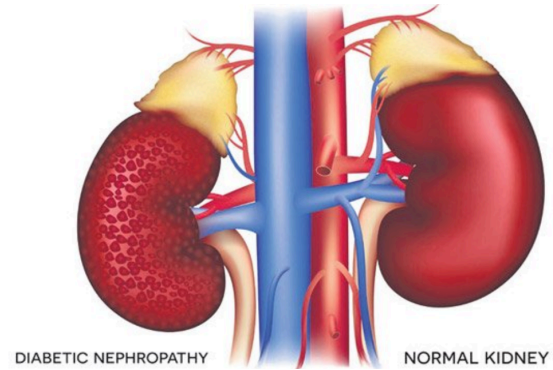
- Spot or floaters in your vision
- Blurred or fluctuating vision
- Impaired color vision
- Vision loss

#### Can result in

- Cataracts – cloudy lens of the eye
- Glaucoma – high eye pressure
- Blindness

## Kidneys and Diabetic Kidney Disease

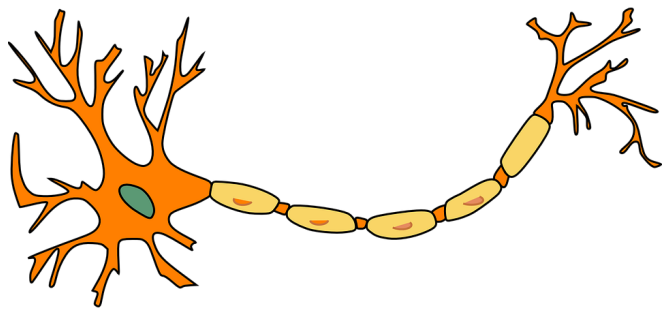
Your kidneys are located in the middle of your back, just below your rib cage. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney disease. About 1 in 4 adults with diabetes develop diabetic kidney disease (diabetic nephropathy), one of the leading causes for dialysis. People usually do not experience symptoms until most of the kidney function is completely gone. Thus, it is important that your health care provider run a kidney test at least once a year to diagnose any problems early and avoid further damage. *See handout: Protect Your Kidneys*



## Nerves and Diabetic Neuropathy

Diabetic neuropathy is nerve damage caused by diabetes. We have nerves throughout our body, so diabetic neuropathy can cause the following complications:

- Numbness, pain, tingling, and/or a burning sensation in the legs, feet, arms and hands
- Digestive issues
- Bowel and bladder problems, including overactive bladder
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexual dysfunction



## Nerve Damage Affecting Our Legs, Feet, Arms, and Hands

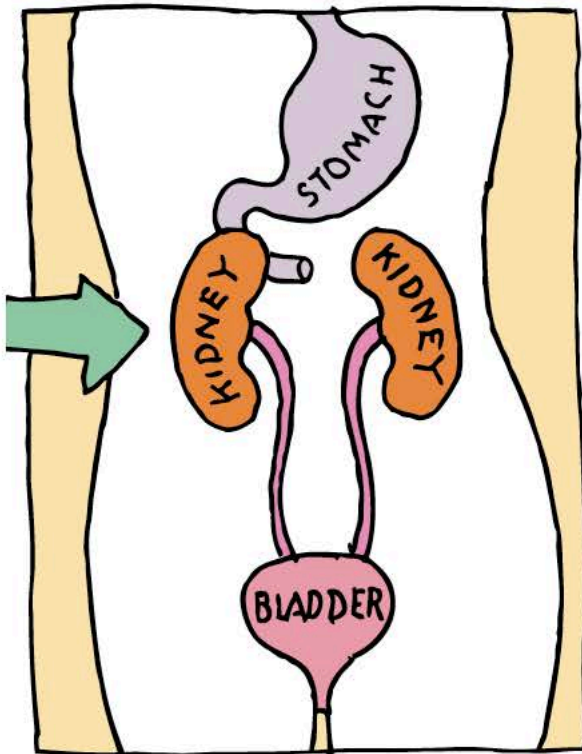
In addition to complications caused when the large blood vessels are damaged (e.g., amputations), when nerves are damaged, our legs, feet, arms, and hands can be so sensitive to touch that even the bedsheets touching the legs and feet can cause severe pain. In the early stages, the pain has been described as “pins and needles.” Most people start with tingling, but some people bypass this step and go straight to numbness. Numbness in your feet can make them more susceptible to injury. For example, you may not be able to feel the injuries, such as blisters or calluses. Poor circulation to your feet also makes it harder for infections and injuries to heal. It is important to check your feet daily for numbness, cuts, swelling, and bruising.

Reminders for those who like to get pedicures: make sure the water is not too hot and ask the person providing the pedicure NOT to use a blade on your feet to remove dead skin, especially if you have nerve damage. *See handout: Tips for Good Foot Care*

# PROTECT YOUR KIDNEYS

The kidneys clean your blood. Their main job is to remove the waste or things in your blood that can make you sick if you don't get rid of them.

People with diabetes have a higher risk or chance of having kidney disease. A problem with your kidneys can cause serious health problems that are hard to control.



Kidney disease is also called a “hidden” health problem. Why? Because there is often no sign of a kidney problem until it is too late.

Stop kidney problems before they start. Talk to your doctor or diabetes educator for more information.

## What can you do?

You can help stop kidney problems before they start if you:

- Control your blood sugar every day



- Control your blood pressure
- Be active and eat healthy foods in the right amounts
- Have a urine protein (kidney) test once a year
- Control your weight or get help to lose weight, if you need to



- Don't smoke!
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day
- Take all the medicine you are supposed to take every day

# TIPS FOR GOOD FOOT CARE



Check your feet and toes daily for cuts, bruises, or swelling



Wear shoes and socks that fit well



Use skin lotion to avoid dry feet (but not between your toes)



Exercise every day for at least 20 to 30 minutes



Wash and dry your feet every day. Use warm (not hot) water and mild soap



File your toenails straight across



See your doctor right away if you hurt your feet



Don't go barefoot - ever!

### ***Nerve Damage Affecting Our Digestion***

Nerve damage can cause the stomach to take a long time to empty. This is called *gastroparesis* which can lead to early feelings of fullness, nausea and vomiting, bloating, and erratic blood sugars. It is difficult to get blood sugars under control for those who have gastroparesis because you cannot determine the time of digestion. Thus, it is difficult to determine the correct time for medications. Gastroparesis can be controlled with medication to enhance blood sugar control. Sometimes, you might be asked to change the timing of meals to get things on track.

### ***Nerve Damage Affecting Our Sexual Function***

Nerve damage affecting sexual function can occur in both men and women. In men it can lead to problems with both erections and ejaculation. In women, it can cause problems like extreme vaginal dryness along with a decrease in desire. Sexual dysfunction may be reversed with blood sugar control, but a lot of times people also need medication.

## **Diabetes and Dental Health**

Diabetes elevates your risk for gum (periodontal) disease. Periodontal disease can lead to painful chewing problems and cause tooth loss. Other problems diabetes can cause include a dry mouth and high blood sugar levels. These problems may lead to a fungal infection called thrush, which causes painful white patches in your mouth. Finally, smoking makes gum disease worse, and thus, quitting smoking would improve dental health.

*See handout: Diabetes Dental Tips*



## **Diabetes and Mental Health**

The unfortunate reality is that diabetes can take a toll on your mental health. It is common and natural to experience an array of emotions, such as anger, denial, or sadness, after receiving a diagnosis of diabetes. You may also feel burnout from the day to day tasks required to manage your diabetes. This is so common it has a name – **Diabetes Burnout**.

Today's class may have brought up feelings too, such as anxiety, sadness, and anger. All of these emotions are normal and valid. It is important that we take the time to use our resilience resources to help cope with these emotions. Doing so will help us feel confident in making healthy decisions for our minds and bodies.



National Institute of Dental  
and Craniofacial Research

# Diabetes: Dental Tips



## Diabetes can cause serious problems in your mouth. You can do something about it.

If you have diabetes, make sure you take care of your mouth. People with diabetes are at risk for mouth infections, especially periodontal (gum) disease. Periodontal disease can damage the gum and bone that hold your teeth in place and may lead to painful chewing problems. Some people with serious gum disease lose their teeth. Periodontal disease may also make it hard to control your blood glucose (blood sugar).

Other problems diabetes can cause are dry mouth and a fungal infection called thrush. Dry mouth happens when you do not have enough saliva—the fluid that keeps your mouth wet. Diabetes may also cause the glucose level in your saliva to increase. Together, these problems may lead to thrush, which causes painful white patches in your mouth.

If your diabetes is not under control, you are more likely to develop problems in your mouth. The good news is you can keep your teeth and gums healthy. By controlling your blood glucose, brushing twice a day, flossing regularly, and visiting the dentist for routine checkups, you can help prevent serious problems in your mouth.

## Take steps to keep your mouth healthy. Call the dentist when you notice a problem.

If you have diabetes, follow these steps:

- Control your blood glucose.
- Brush twice a day and floss regularly.
- Visit a dentist for routine checkups. Be sure to tell the dentist that you have diabetes.
- Tell the dentist if your dentures (false teeth) do not fit right, or if your gums are sore.
- Quit smoking. Smoking makes gum disease worse. A physician or dentist can help you quit.

Take time to check your mouth regularly for any problems. Sometimes people notice that their gums bleed when they brush and floss. Others notice dryness, soreness, white patches, or a bad taste in the mouth. All of these are reasons to visit the dentist.

Remember, good blood glucose control can help prevent mouth problems.

For more copies contact:  
National Institute of Dental  
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National Oral Health  
Information Clearinghouse  
1 NOHIC Way  
Bethesda, MD 20892–3500  
1–866–232–4528  
[www.nidcr.nih.gov](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov)

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## Depression

Although depression can sneak up on anyone, people with diabetes are at higher risk. It is important we all know the symptoms of depression so we can watch for these symptoms in ourselves and in our friends and family.

### Symptoms of depression

- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Change in sleep patterns
- Waking up earlier than normal
- Change in appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Loss of energy
- Nervousness
- Guilt
- Morning sadness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Declining school or work performance



**Seeking Help** – If you think you are suffering from depression, reach out to a doctor, therapist, or other health care provider. Often a combination of medication and talk therapy can be very beneficial.

You also don't have to be living with depression to get benefit from talk therapy! A therapist can help you identify and express your emotions in dealing with a diabetes diagnosis or other issues in your life.

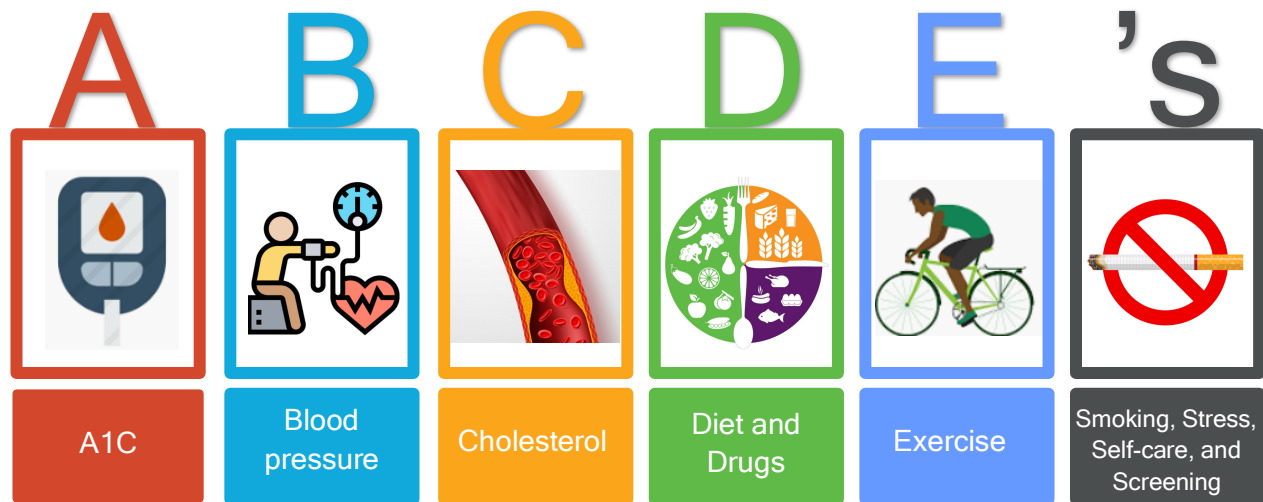
You can also seek help from other friends and relatives with diabetes. Openly sharing our experiences and emotions around diabetes can help us connect with one another and realize we aren't going through this alone. Our TX STRIDE diabetes team can provide support for enhancing the resilience resources you have available to cope effectively with the challenges and adversities of life. When we seek help, we notice that what at first seemed *impossible*, now seems *possible* with support.



## Preventing Diabetes Complications

While there are many potential complications to diabetes, *the good news is that we can focus on the same healthy habits and goals to prevent all of these diabetes complications.*

These healthy habits are referred to as the **ABCDE's** of diabetes complication prevention. We can call on our resilience resources to help us stay motivated and achieve these healthy habits and goals.



**A:** Aim to keep your **A1C** below 7%

**B:** Try to keep your **blood pressure** below 140/90 mm Hg (or the target your doctor sets)

**C:** Control your **cholesterol levels** (*See handout: Tips to Control Cholesterol and Diabetes*)

**D:** Eat a healthy **diet** and take all the **drugs** prescribed by your doctor

**E:** **Exercise** for at least 150 minutes a week (just 30 minutes, 5 days a week)

**S:** Stop **smoking** or don't start (if you need help, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW)

Reduce **stress**

Engage in **self-care**

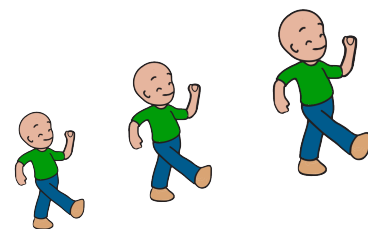
**Screen** for complications; be proactive when you visit your health care provider

### Until We Meet Again...

Keep using your **TX STRIDE Physical Activity Cards**

Use your Fitbit to enhance motivation and get more steps

Be mindful of using your Resilience Resources daily

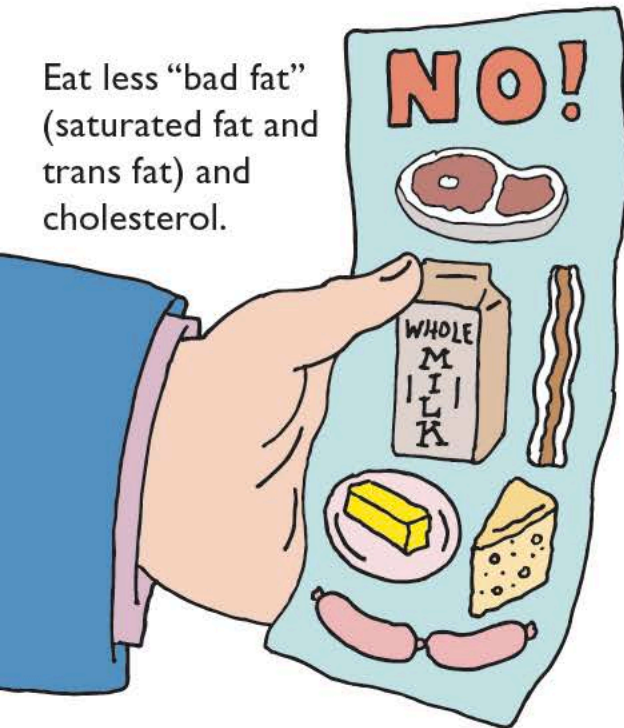


### Bring to Our Next Class Session

Your diabetes notebook

# TIPS TO CONTROL CHOLESTEROL AND DIABETES

Eat less “bad fat” (saturated fat and trans fat) and cholesterol.



Read food labels. Buy low-fat, high-fiber foods when you shop.



Eating foods high in saturated fats, trans fat (the “bad” fats) and cholesterol can cause serious health problems, including a heart attack or stroke. If you have diabetes, your chance of having health problems is even higher.

Be smart! To help you stay healthy, eat fewer bad fats and more good (unsaturated) fats, such as

- nuts
- vegetable oils (olive and canola oil)
- fish
- avocado

Call your doctor today for a simple test to check your fat and cholesterol levels.

