



# Diagnosed with Diabetes May Cause Symptoms of Depression

More than 3.5 million people in SA which counts for 6% of the population is diagnosed with Diabetes. Being diagnosed with Diabetes may come as a shock, and one needs to go through various life changing adjustments, however, if detected early, it is treatable and very manageable.

Changing and adjusting your life to fit your new lifestyle includes taking care of your mental wellbeing and it is important that when initially being diagnosed with diabetes or any other chronic illness, you consult with our doctor, and keep up regular visits and disclose any information that you are unclear about. Being diagnosed with a chronic illness can come with uncertainty, anxiety and even at times depression. Studies have shown that there is a close correlation between diabetes and depression. If you are already suffering from a mental health illness such as depression, having diabetes may make the symptoms of depression worsen and also the stress of managing diabetes every day, may also contribute to the onset of depression. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), says that "people with diabetes are twice as likely as the average person to have depression".

There is also a possibility that symptoms of depression may reduce a patient's physical wellbeing. Some of the symptoms of depression are over eating which may cause

weight gain, or under eating which contributes to poor nutrition, feelings of hopelessness and not taking care of yourself (bathing, not wearing clean clothes, poor hygiene) sleeping too much or too little (which can have an effect on one's emotional and cognitive wellbeing) and this may contribute to the symptoms of diabetes worsening.

It is important again that a diabetes patient monitors their mental wellbeing and monitors closely that their diabetes symptoms don't worsen.

Symptoms of Depression to look out for:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment, such as

headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

Received a diagnosis, now what?

- Keep a mood diary to monitor your emotions and your behavior. This allows you to keep in check and notice if you are becoming at risk of suffering from depression.
- Get support from family and friends. Attend a support group with people who are going through similar experiences as you. This offers a safe place for you to share your feelings and concerns and allows you to exchange helpful tips and coping tools to help manage your illness.
- Get educated. Learn as much as you can about diabetes- symptoms, treatment and management and lifestyle changes. Become familiar of the symptoms and risk factors for depression.
- Visit your doctor regularly to monitor your diabetes and help you manage physical and mental wellbeing.

Diabetes and depression are both real illnesses that need to be taken seriously. If you or a loved one have been diagnosed with a chronic illness and are needing support or if you just need someone to talk to, call SADAG on 0800 21 22 23 and a friendly counsellor will help you get through this transition and help you with coping tools and will provide you with information on depression. 