



What makes a situation stressful?

For a situation to be stressful, it must contain one or more of the following elements¹:

- **Novelty:** Something new you have never experienced before;
- **Unpredictability:** Something you had no way of knowing would occur;
- **Threat to the ego:** Your competence is called into question;
- **Sense of control:** You feel you have little or no control over the situation.

When to reach out for help

It is normal to feel stressed about your diabetes from time to time.

However, if you are constantly feeling frustrated and discouraged by your diabetes, you are experiencing what is called “diabetes distress.” This distress can progress, leading to diabetes-related exhaustion or depression, and can greatly affect your health.

It is important to consult with a health professional.

¹ Source: Centre for Studies on Human Stress

Resources

Psychosocial support available from your CLSC

Centre for Studies on Human Stress
humanstress.ca

Helplines by region
lignedecoute.ca

Info-Social
811
press 2

Ligne Parents
ligneparents.com
1-800-361-5085

Ordre des psychologues du Québec
ordrepsy.qc.ca

Stress Strategies
stressesstrategies.ca

Tel-Jeunes
teljeunes.com
1-800-263-2266



Life's brighter under the sun

This educational tool was produced with the support of Sun Life, which is committed to preventing diabetes.

Questions about diabetes?
InfoDiabetes Service
514-259-3422
1-800-361-3504
infodiabete@diabete.qc.ca

Diabetes School
Universi D
universi-d.com

Diabetes Québec
diabete.qc.ca

Diabetes Québec

Stress and Diabetes



What is stress?

Stress is what you feel, physically or mentally, when you perceive a situation as threatening.

Stress can be caused by both positive and negative events. It can be of short or long duration. Short-term stress is not necessarily bad. It stimulates the secretion of hormones that help you manage the situation. Long-term stress, on the other hand, is bad for your health.

Causes of stress can be classified in two categories:

- **Physical:** chronic disease, pain, pregnancy, infection, etc.
- **Psychological:** anxiety, depression, bereavement, job loss, marriage, moving, family and professional responsibilities, traffic jams, etc.





What are the main symptoms of stress?

Stress manifests differently from person to person depending on their personality, ability to adapt and resistance to stress. Here are some examples of symptoms related to stress:

Physical:

- Higher blood sugar
- Muscle tension
- Faster heartbeat
- Shaking
- Sexual dysfunction
- Dizziness, sweaty palms
- Stomach problems, indigestion

Psychological:

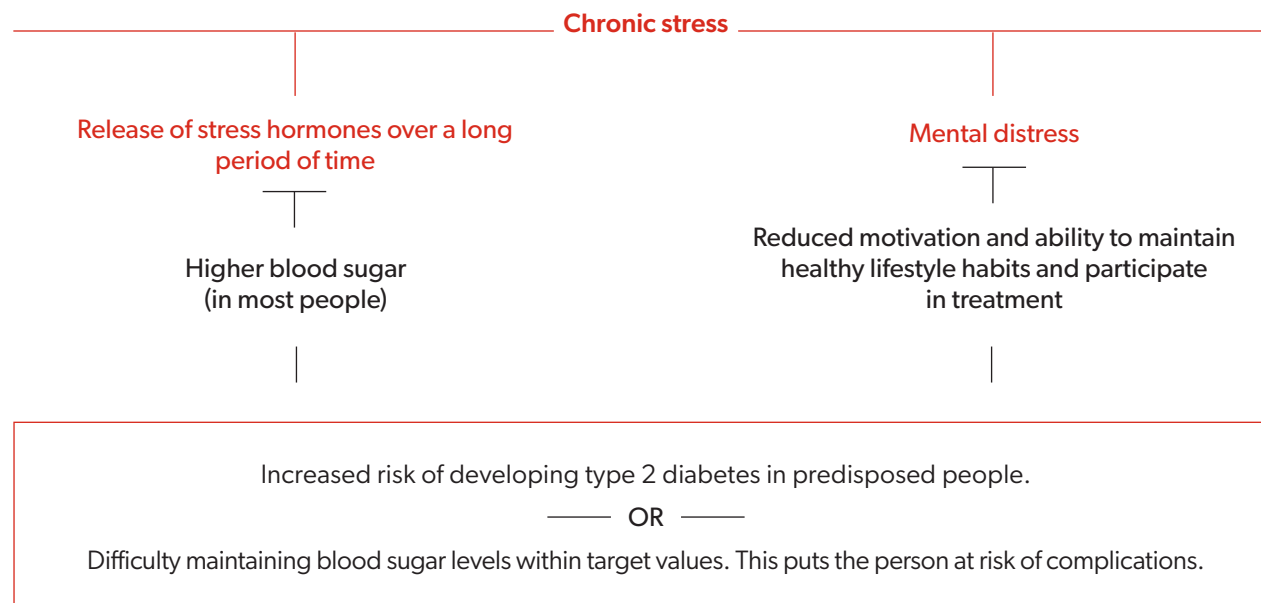
- Anxiety about the future
- Irritability
- Lower self-esteem
- Sadness
- Indecisiveness

Behavioural:

- Aggressiveness
- Memory loss
- Trouble concentrating
- Smoking, drinking or taking drugs
- Withdrawal, isolation
- Weeping or inability to weep

What is the link between stress and diabetes?

During a stressful situation, the body reacts by releasing stress hormones. These hormones cause **a temporary rise in blood sugar** to give the body the energy it needs to physically deal with the stressor (fight or flight). **However, in people with diabetes, this increase in blood sugar may persist due to a lack or absence of insulin:**



What are the sources of stress associated with diabetes?

Health-related:

Inconvenient symptoms, risk of complications, decreased quality of life, feeling a loss of control over one's health, worries about the future, etc.

Social:

Prejudice, discrimination, adhering to schedules, pressure on family and loved ones, relationship between the patient and their team of health professionals, etc.

Mental burden:

Diabetes is a chronic disease that requires constant and relentless vigilance and daily planning.

Financial:

Additional and sometimes unexpected expenses, trouble keeping a job, etc.

Take action to reduce your stress!

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to managing stress. The key is to find the methods that work for you and let you handle stress effectively. Here are a few suggestions:

Mental exercises:

- Redirect your thoughts to the present moment or recall a happy memory;
- Incorporate 5 to 10 minutes of relaxation techniques into your day: yoga, breathing, tai chi, a relaxation break, meditation, etc.

Physical exercise:

Get moving to clear your mind, reduce tension and release the energy built up in your body from stress.

Professional help:

Seek help from a social worker, psychologist, psychotherapist or doctor.

Recreation and fun:

Take time to relax, get involved in creative hobbies, read, go out, play games, watch a movie or listen to music.

Sleep:

Organize your schedule to ensure that you get enough hours of restorative sleep.

Organization and routine:

Organize your life to get your priorities in order and to reduce the number of unexpected events and the lack of control and stress associated with them.

Social support:

Talk about your emotions and problems with people you trust. Don't hesitate to reach out to your loved ones for help and to delegate tasks.