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Anxiety

***Information for people with diabetes
and their support network***

**Diabetes Centre
JJR Macleod Centre for Diabetes,
Endocrinology and Metabolism,
Foresterhill**

Why have I been given this leaflet?

We've given you this leaflet because the results from the questionnaire that you completed show that you may have clinical anxiety. If you already know this and are receiving treatment, please speak to the person overseeing this before following any advice in this leaflet.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural part of living a full and interesting life. However, for some people anxiety is quite intense and interferes with their day-to-day life. Anxiety can be related to diabetes (perhaps concerns about future health) or can be related to life generally (perhaps concerns about work, relationships, children etc), or both.

Anxiety is characterised by worry. Worrying thoughts are about things going wrong in the future and can include making many plans to deal with these future imagined disasters.

Anxiety has a biological component, namely the release of stress hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol, into the blood. If people have been under stress for a long time then the natural levels of stress hormones circulating in their blood increase considerably. This leaves them vulnerable to fairly intense feelings such as panic, angry outbursts and intense frustration.

Some other symptoms of anxiety are listed below.

- Worrying about things going wrong
- Feeling agitated
- Feeling irritable
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Increased heart rate
- Planning often for things going wrong
- Often feeling there's too little time to do too many things
- Feeling apprehensive
- Nausea and butterflies
- Breathlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling that they can't cope, or angry and frustrated about having diabetes
- Finding using a CGM or insulin pump overwhelming for various reasons, including making sense of all the data.

How does anxiety affect diabetes?

Research shows that people with significant levels of anxiety have higher levels of blood glucose than those who do not. This is probably partly because stress hormones cause the body to release glucose into the blood. This makes the job of controlling blood glucose even harder.

Anxiety is also associated with higher blood pressure, increased fat deposits in arteries, and poorer functioning of the immune system.

We know that many people with diabetes experience anxiety. In fact, about one in every six (about 17%) people with diabetes has significant levels of anxiety at any one time.

What should I do?

The good news is that there are now a range of effective treatments for anxiety. If your anxiety is treated successfully, you'll be much calmer, have more energy, and be in a much better position to manage your diabetes.

We recommend that you speak to your GP about how you have been feeling over recent times. We'll write to your GP and let them know about the questionnaire results. Our letter may not get there before you get an appointment, so your GP will probably find it useful if you explain why we recommended you visit the practice.

In the meantime, there are a few things that you can do which can help (below). These involve trying to find ways to relax, and finding ways to get caught up less in worrying thoughts. Regular relaxing can help lower the levels of stress hormones in your blood.

- Make time to relax everyday for 30 minutes or more. This could include things like having a bath, reading, listening to music, going for a walk, yoga or playing golf. The key here is to use this time to concentrate on what you are doing and, as best you can, not get caught up in worrying.
- Put aside a small amount of time every week to worry, and talk about your concerns, rather than do these continually. This will be hard at first but gets easier with practice.
- Begin exercising. If it's been a long time since you exercised you may wish to speak with your healthcare professional before you start. If you plan doing intense exercise, speak to someone involved in your diabetes care because if you're on insulin this might need to be adjusted. The diabetes team can support you to increase your activity with structured exercise plans

An everyday alternative would be to go walking and to build up your speed and the amount of time you spend doing this. Using a step counter, such as a pedometer or wearable tracker (such as a Fitbit) can be a helpful tool to record your activity levels.

Useful contacts

The Diabetes Psychology Service offers individual therapy as well as Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy courses to help adults with diabetes who have significant levels of depression or anxiety. We also have facilities to have appointments with you using Near Me. Near Me is an online platform that you can use on any camera device with access to the internet (so you can have appointments remotely and don't need to come to a clinic for them).

There are leaflets and posters with further information on our services in the waiting areas or you can make a time to meet the psychology team by calling:


Shona Robertson

Secretary

 **01224 558075** 

Pamela Souter

Secretary

 **01224 558121** 


You can also email the psychology team at:

gram.psychologydiabetes@nhs.scot

Other useful contacts

Breathing Space

Telephone Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

 **0800 83 85 87** (freephone number)

The helpline is open 24 hours a day at weekends (from Friday 6pm to Monday 6am). All calls are confidential.

 **www.breathingspace.scot/living-life**

Headspace

Online meditation and mindfulness courses to help alleviate emotional distress.

🔗 [**www.headspace.com**](http://www.headspace.com)

Be Mindful

An online mind-body approach that helps people to manage their thoughts and feelings.

🔗 [**www.bemindful.co.uk**](http://www.bemindful.co.uk)

Finding Peace in a Frantic World

Online mindfulness courses, app and book to help alleviate emotional distress.

🔗 [**www.franticworld.com**](http://www.franticworld.com)

Calm

Meditation and mindfulness app to help reduce emotional distress.

🔗 [**www.calm.com**](http://www.calm.com)

Moodjuice

Support for people struggling with a range of emotional distress.

🔗 [**www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk**](http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk)

Living Life to the Full

Online life skills course.

🔗 [**www.lltff.com**](http://www.lltff.com)

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