



# WHO CAN HELP?

## Depression Alliance Scotland

Help and support for people experiencing depression and low mood.  
Tel: 0845 123 23 20  
www.lookokfeelcrap.org  
Website: www.dascot.org

## Diabetes UK

Help and support for people with diabetes  
Careline: 0845 120 2960  
E: carelinescotland@diabetes.org.uk  
www.diabetes.org.uk

## Samaritans

Confidential, emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings  
Helpline: 08457 909090 24 hours  
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

## Breathing Space

A free confidential helpline to call when feeling down or stressed  
Helpline: 0800 83 85 87  
Website: www.breathingspace.co.uk

## Stresswatch Scotland

Supports recovery from stress, anxiety and related conditions  
Helpline: 01563 574 144  
Email: info@stresswatchscotland.org  
Website: www.stresswatchscotland.org

## Living Life to the Full

A free online life skills course developed in Scotland based on cognitive behaviour therapy  
Website: www.livinglifetothefull.com

Living Better is a project led by the Royal College of General Practitioners (Scotland), in partnership with the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health and the University of Stirling. Other partners in the project include British Heart Foundation, Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland, Depression Alliance Scotland and Diabetes UK Scotland, and funded by the Scottish Government.

We would like to know if you have found this leaflet useful or not useful. Please contact the Living Better Project at:

Living Better Project, Royal College of General Practitioners (Scotland), FREEPOST SCO6512, Edinburgh EH2 1JX

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# DIABETES & MOOD

Do you have diabetes?

How are you feeling in yourself?

**It's alright to feel down!**

Many people who have diabetes find that they experience low mood, depression and anxiety. Research has found that people with diabetes are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than people in the general population. There are many reasons why this may be but whatever the cause, if you have diabetes and are finding your mood is affected, you don't have to feel like this; there are things you can do to feel better.

Unfortunately many people don't seek help because they don't recognise the symptoms and don't realise that this is what is going on. Many people don't want to speak about how they feel because they are scared of being labelled mentally ill.



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## Living Better

Improving mental health and wellbeing of people with long term conditions  
More information on the project can be found at: [www.livingbetter-scotland.org.uk](http://www.livingbetter-scotland.org.uk)

# IS YOUR MOOD A PROBLEM?

## Here are some signs to look out for:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling inadequate
- Anxiety
- Feeling negative about your life
- Not liking yourself, feeling ugly
- Feeling unable to enjoy things that you used to like doing
- Feeling guilty or bad
- Feeling agitated
- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Feeling irritable or moody
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Loss of energy or motivation
- Loss of sex drive
- Disturbed sleep
- Poor concentration
- Frequent minor health problems, such as headaches or stomachaches
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

If you recognise some of these signs and have felt like this for more than two weeks, please speak to your GP and contact one of the organisations listed on this factsheet

## Why do I feel low?

- Diabetes is a serious illness, but it can be managed and controlled. When you are diagnosed with diabetes it is common to experience powerful emotions such as denial, shock, confusion, anger, resentment, guilt, blame and self-blame. Some people go through a stage very similar to mourning - as though they are grieving for lost health.
- It can be frustrating learning to live with a long term health condition particularly if you've not had any health concerns before.
- You may feel fed up with the changes to your lifestyle and having to visit your clinic and GP regularly.
- You may feel isolated from your friends and family and feel like you can't take part in activities you used to share as easily as before.
- There is some evidence that blood glucose levels can affect mood. Some people may be affected more than others.

## How does my mood affect my diabetes?

- Many people with low mood feel unmotivated and can't be bothered. This may cause you to not bother to check your blood sugar or insulin levels or you may not take medication that has been prescribed for your diabetes.
- Feeling low can also affect your appetite which can, in turn, affect your blood sugar levels. You may eat foods that are high in sugar which aren't good for you or not eat at all.
- If you are feeling stressed or anxious, this can increase your blood sugar levels. All of this may lead to you feeling physically unwell which could make you feel even lower or more stressed leading to a vicious cycle.



# HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY LOW MOOD?

## Talk about it

When you feel low and stressed, it can be difficult to tell someone else how you feel. You may feel that people don't want to listen to you being miserable. However talking about how you feel to your friends, family, doctor or diabetes nurse is an important step on the road to recovery. You could also call a helpline; we've listed some in the Who Can Help? section in this leaflet.

## Your GP

One way to get help is to speak to your GP. Building up a good relationship with your GP can be a real help in getting better. If you find that your GP doesn't know much about low mood and diabetes, or you feel that it is difficult to speak to him or her, it may be worth finding out if there is another GP in your practice who knows more about depression or who you would find easier to talk to. It is perfectly acceptable to make an appointment to see a different GP in the same practice.

## Antidepressants

Antidepressant drugs work by increasing the levels of certain chemicals in the brain. There are many different types of

antidepressants and different people will respond to different drugs. Some antidepressants may have an effect on your blood sugar so your GP may need to adjust any medication you are on for diabetes accordingly. Some antidepressants, in particular older drugs, can cause weight gain and so it's important to keep an eye on your weight and speak to your GP if you have any concerns.

## Talking Therapies

There are different talking therapies available, including cognitive behaviour therapy, psychotherapy and counselling. These can help you explore why you feel like you do and how to change it. You can get therapy through the NHS, voluntary organisations or privately.

## Support Groups

Self-help support groups enable you to meet others who feel like you do. This can help you feel less alone. Depression Alliance Scotland and Diabetes UK run support groups in Scotland. Depression Alliance Scotland's groups are for people who feel low; you don't need a diagnosis of depression. Diabetes UK groups offer people living with diabetes a chance to meet and share

experiences with others. This includes emotional support, as many other people at the group will have also experienced low mood or stress.

## Exercise

Exercise, especially structured physical activity, has been found to alleviate depression. It can also lead to better control of high blood sugar levels. If you haven't exercised for a while, speak to your GP before starting a programme of exercise. If you are on insulin, you may need to adjust your dosage if you are doing a lot of exercises so it's important to consult your GP or diabetic nurse.

## Stress Management

Stress can increase blood sugar levels so learning to control stress can help both your mood and your diabetes. You can download free anxiety control training modules from Living Life to the Full, a free online life skills course. Other things you can do to reduce stress include exercise, meeting friends, relaxing with a good book, playing with your pets, having a long bath, whatever helps you switch off.

## Alternative therapies

Therapies like acupuncture, tai chi, reflexology and yoga can help some people relax and feel better about themselves.

## Food

Eating a healthy balanced diet can help lift your mood as well as help to control your diabetes. The healthy diet recommended for people with diabetes is the same as is recommended for everyone. Diabetes UK can give you information about eating healthily and there's lots of good information on their website. Depression Alliance Scotland have a factsheet on food and mood. Both organisations' contact details can be found in the Who Can Help? section of this leaflet.

