Diabetes and Depression

With Diabetes often comes another potentially debilitating disease: depression. Depression affects 3-5% of the general population, but 15-20% of those with Diabetes. Therefore, it is important to have a good understanding of depression, and how to address it as part of a comprehensive Diabetes management program.

Causes of Depression in Diabetes

It isn’t clear why diabetics have a higher rate of depression, but there are some theories. It is possible that:

• The stress of managing Diabetes becomes overwhelming, thus contributing to depression.
• Depression may come from the effects of Diabetes on the brain.
• Diabetes can cause health problems that worsen depression.
• Medical complications can result in feeling out of control, which can contribute to depression.

Diabetes and Depression Can be a Dangerous Combination

Depression can block Diabetes self-care, such as exercise, diet, and blood sugar testing. Those with Type 2 Diabetes and major depression are more likely to experience life-threatening complications from Diabetes. This includes microvascular complications, such as blindness, end-stage kidney disease, amputations and kidney failure, and macrovascular complications, such as heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular problems.

Know the Symptoms of Depression

The most common signs of depression are:

• A loss of pleasure in daily activities
• Feeling worthless and hopeless
• Excessive crying and feeling empty
• Loss of energy and enthusiasm for life
• Sleeping excessively or disturbed sleep
• A severe change in appetite
• Thoughts of suicide or self-harm

If You Are Diabetic and Experience Depression

There are important steps you can take to help treat the depression that accompanies Diabetes:

• Continue your Diabetes self-management program.
• Discuss symptoms and potential solutions with your doctor, which may include medication.
• Consider seeking counseling.
• Be aware that the lifestyle changes that help with Diabetes also help alleviate symptoms of depression.

There is hope - with recognition and the proper help, a person experiencing Diabetes and depression can again lead a fulfilling and happy life.