

Prediabetes online programme



Waterside PCN

Created by the Waterside Primary Care Network
Health and Wellbeing Team

Some information taken from: [diabetes.org.uk](https://www.diabetes.org.uk)

Part 5 – Stress, Mood and Sleep

Part 5 content:

- How does stress affect diabetes and blood sugar levels
- Diabetes and your emotions
- What is stress
- How to cope with stress
- Emotions and food
- Better sleep tips
- Focus of the week



Waterside PCN

Stress, Mood & Sleep



How does stress affect diabetes and blood sugar levels?

Stress affects lifestyle factors:

- Affects sleep/sleeping pattern
- Low exercise levels
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Eating poor quality diet / (comfort eating)
- Affect willpower/motivation to keep a healthy lifestyle going

Stress affects hormones:

Cortisol is a stress hormone and provides an energy boost for a 'fight or flight' response.

Long term high cortisol levels can increase risk of:

- High Blood Sugar Levels/Insulin Resistance
 - High Blood Pressure
- Increase visceral fat (weight around the middle)
- Weakened immune system

Diabetes and your emotions

Diabetes doesn't just affect you physically, it can affect you emotionally too.

Whether you've just been diagnosed or you've lived with diabetes for a long time, you may need support for all the emotions you're feeling. This could be stress, feeling low and depressed, or burnt out. The people around you can feel all of this too.

Whatever you're feeling, you are not alone.

Stress and diabetes

Stress doesn't cause diabetes but it can affect your blood sugar levels and how you look after your condition.

Having diabetes to manage on top of life's normal ups and downs can itself be a cause of stress. It's not always easy to live with and this can also feel harder when many people don't understand it.

You can't avoid stressful situations but there are things you can do to make it easier to cope. This will help stop stress building up and affecting your emotional health.

Find out what stress is, how it affects diabetes and what you can do to change things.

What is stress?



Stress is how your body and mind reacts to new or difficult situations. It might be something short-term like worrying about a presentation you're giving at work the next day. Or going to a party where you don't know many people at the weekend. It can also be something physical like an accident or illness.



Or you may have less immediate but more constant worries about things like money, a relationship or coping with the loss of someone close.



Stress can affect you physically, emotionally and mentally.

How stress can affect diabetes

If you're feeling stressed, your body releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. This should give you an energy boost for a 'fight or flight' response. But the hormones make it harder for insulin to work properly, known as insulin resistance. As energy can't get into your cells, your blood sugar levels rise.

If your blood sugar levels go too high, it's called going hyper (full name hyperglycaemia).

If stress doesn't go away, it can keep your blood sugar levels high and put you at higher risk of diabetes complications. It can also affect your mood and how you look after yourself, which can start to affect your emotional health.

But there are things you can do to take the pressure off.

How to cope with stress

Everyone copes with stressful situations in different ways. If you want to change the way you react so things feel easier, try the Stress Manager tool on the Diabetes UK [Learning Zone](#). Answer questions on how you deal with the demands of managing your condition to get a plan of action to help you simplify stressful situations.

Look after yourself

At times of stress, it's even more important to remember to look after yourself and treat yourself kindly.

But we know it's not always as easy as that. If you're extra busy at work or looking after family then forgetting to eat.

It's important to get a balance between looking after yourself without putting too much pressure on yourself to do everything perfectly. This can add or lead to stress. But it's good to be aware of how easy it can be to give into the habit of letting diabetes self-care slip in times of stress.

Getting enough sleep and building exercise, rest and relaxation time into your routine helps some people cope better with stress.

If you find that stress is affecting how you manage your diabetes, your diabetes team may be able to give you advice about what could help. For example, they can help you work out when you might need to adjust your insulin.

It doesn't matter that what you get stressed about may not be related to diabetes. It's getting support to manage it that's important. Getting support may start to help you think about how you react to stress and think about things – and what you can change to make things easier.

Talking about how you feel

Talking about diabetes and how it's making you feel isn't always easy. It can be hard to get started, or find someone you think you can open up to.

Maybe you don't feel like you need to talk about anything or you don't want to burden anyone.

But offloading some of what you're feeling has so many benefits, both for you and for those close to you.

It's not easy to stop feelings of anxiety and worry, and these are completely normal responses given the current circumstance.

You can't control your feelings, but you can control what you do with them. Talking about how you're feeling might help.





You know that turning to comfort food will raise your blood sugar and make you feel worse.

Similarly, drinking more alcohol will affect your blood sugar levels.

Drink less alcohol

Although a couple of glasses of wine in the evening can help you fall asleep, you sleep less deeply after drinking alcohol. The next day you'll be tired, even if you sleep a full 8 hours.

Cut down on alcohol before bedtime. You'll get a better night's rest and have more energy.

The NHS recommends that men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week, which is equivalent to 6 pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine.

Try to have several alcohol-free days each week.

Read more about how to [cut down on alcohol](#).

Emotions and food

Diabetes can put more of a focus on food and diet. Having to pay close to attention to what you eat and learn new ways to cook can be stressful.

Some people find they eat more when they're stressed or eat less because they're feeling low.

Eating different foods can have an impact on your mood too – find out more about the link between [your feelings and food](#).

My food and mood diary

Use this diary as a way to monitor what you are eating and how it makes you feel before and after. Tracking your eating habits in this way will help you highlight why you might be reaching for certain foods. It can also be a starting point to understanding the importance of a healthy, balanced diet for both your body and your mind.

We recommend filling this out every day for two weeks so you can start to notice patterns in your eating behaviours.

Here is an example of what your diary could look like.



You can express your feelings in your own way here. You could use smiley or sad faces or even colours to reflect how you're feeling eg yellow for when you're happy and blue for when you're feeling down.

Day of the week: Monday

Date: 22 March

Time of day	Where I'm eating	Who I'm eating with	Feelings	Hunger on a scale of 0 to 10 eg 0 = not hungry at all 10 = starving	Type of food or drink and portion size	Feelings straight after eating eg positive	Feelings one hour after eating	Reflections
8.30am	On the sofa	With my children	Stressed	5	Large bowl of porridge and a cup of coffee with 1 tsp of sugar	Feeling satisfied 😊	Feeling satisfied	Not a concern
10am	At my desk	Alone	Bored	3	3 biscuits	Feeling satisfied	Feeling guilty	I tend to eat unnecessary sweet things when I'm bored at work

Start a food and mood diary

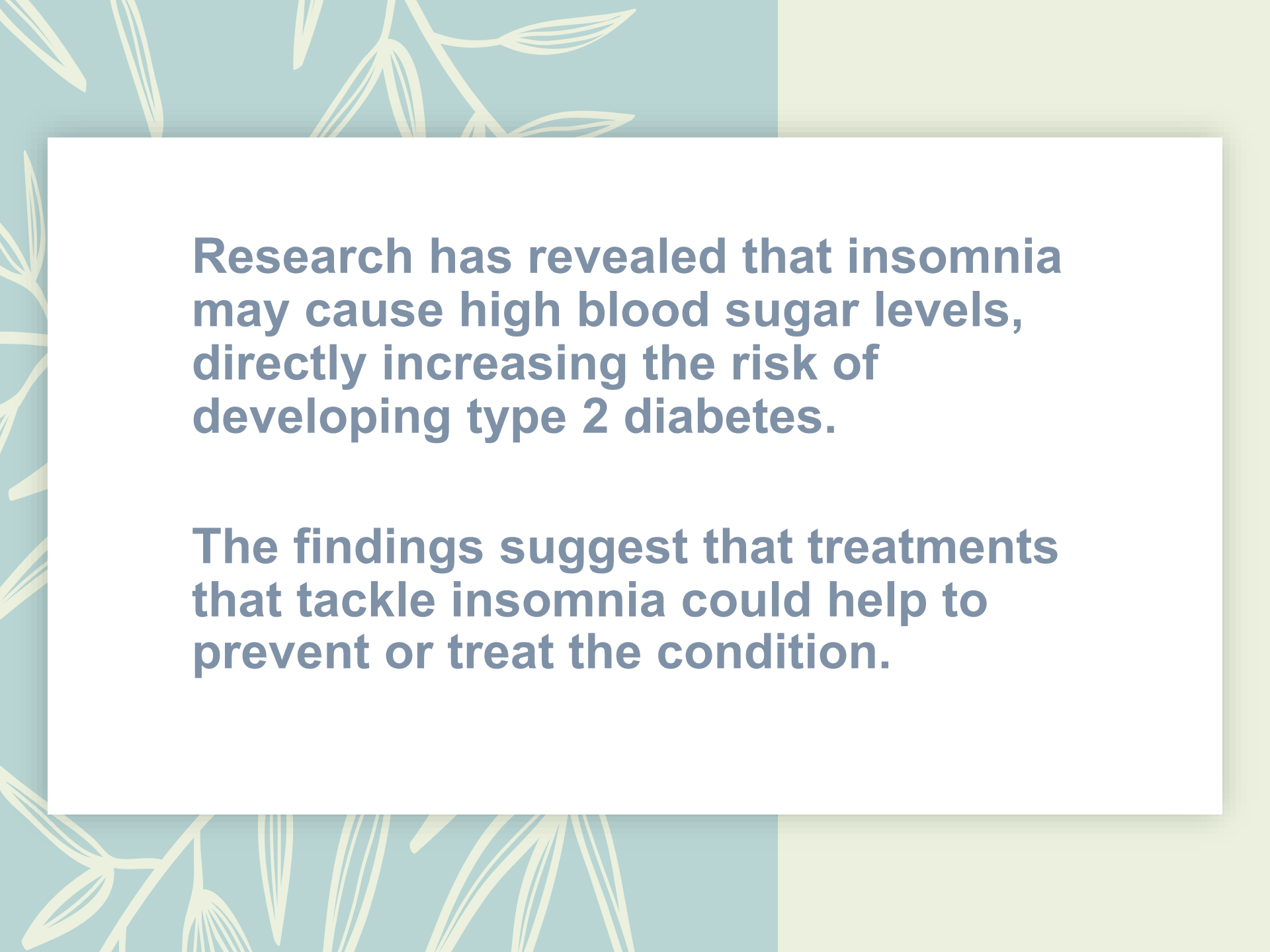
If you're worried that the food you're eating is affecting your emotional health or mood, you can download [My Food and Mood Diary \(PDF, 36KB\)](#).

This is a great way to track what food you've eaten and the effect it could be having on your mood and your diabetes.

Dr Victoria King, Head of Research at Diabetes UK, said ...

“Previous studies into people’s weight and sleep patterns have linked reduced sleep to Type 2 diabetes and obesity. Indeed, some laboratory-based studies have demonstrated that getting only four hours’ sleep a night might affect brain function, appetite and glucose metabolism. The level of sleep deprivation in these studies, however, is not particularly representative of the amount of sleep most of us could be missing out on.

What we can be sure of is that eating a balanced diet rich in fruit and vegetables, maintaining a healthy weight and being more physically active can help to reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes as well as help people with the condition to manage it more effectively, and lower the likelihood of developing serious complications.”



Research has revealed that insomnia may cause high blood sugar levels, directly increasing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The findings suggest that treatments that tackle insomnia could help to prevent or treat the condition.

Sleep well

Many people don't get the sleep they need to stay alert through the day.

The website of the Royal College of Psychiatrists has information on [sleeping well](#).

Tips for sleeping well include:

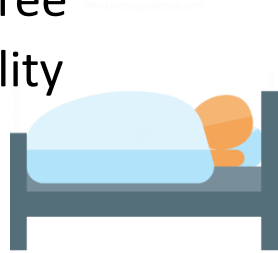
- going to bed and getting up in the morning at the same time every day
- avoiding naps in the day
- taking time to relax before you go to bed



Better sleep tips

Sleep environment

- Dark and cool (16-18°C)
- Clutter free
- Bed quality



Routine

- Wake up time and work backwards
- Create bedtime routine
- Allow light in



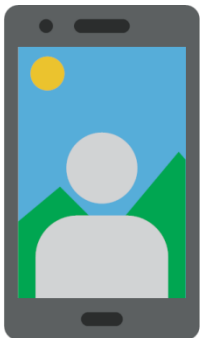
Caffeine and alcohol

- Swap to herbal/fruit teas
- Reduce alcohol frequency and amount



Screen time

- Avoid technology in the evening
- Keep electronics away to avoid temptation



Physical activity

- 30 minutes of physical activity per day
- Meditation and yoga in evening



Focus of the week

How are you feeling ...

Are you coping well with your stress?

Have you noticed patterns in your eating behaviours?

Do you talk to anyone about your worries?

Are you getting enough sleep?

Ask yourself ... do I need to make any changes?