



## November is National Diabetes Month

Did you know that African Americans face higher rates of diabetes and often have more complications? This month we want to share more information about this illness that impacts the lives of so many African American families and communities.

**What causes diabetes?** Diabetes is caused by the body's inability regulate blood sugar levels. Insulin is the main hormone involved in helping the body use up the sugar in the blood. When you do not have enough insulin or cannot use the insulin that you have, sugars can build up in the blood. All the foods we eat are turned into glucose (blood sugar), some foods just break down into more glucose than others. Sugars and carbohydrates make the most glucose. We need glucose for our muscles and organs to work, but, high levels of sugar can lead to nerve damage and can also cause damage to blood vessels. This increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and can cause kidney damage. Diabetes can also cause vision problems.

There are three different kinds of diabetes: Type 1 (the kind you are born with), Type 2 (usually develops over time and can be related to diet and physical activity), and gestational diabetes (develops during pregnancy). By keeping blood sugar levels within normal ranges, people with diabetes can help reduce their risks of serious complications.

**How can I lower my risk of developing diabetes?** Getting regular checkups if you are at risk for diabetes is important. The earlier problems with blood sugar are caught, the more likely you are to be able to get it back under control. Risk for diabetes is higher for those who are overweight or obese, so maintaining a healthy weight is important. Physical activity and exercise are also helpful in lowering blood sugar levels.

**What can I do if I have diabetes?** The most important thing if you have been told that you have diabetes is to visit the doctor regularly, take any medications that have been prescribed, and keep track of your blood sugar. Communicating with your doctor about how you are feeling and how you are taking your medicines is also important. Most people who have diabetes are advised to lower their sugar and carbohydrate intake. Meeting with a registered dietician can be helpful if you have questions about your diet. However, eating lean proteins, reducing sugary drinks and sweets, eating fewer processed carbohydrates like pasta and bread, and eating more fruits and vegetables is always a good idea.

Exercise is also important in managing blood sugar. When your heart beats a little faster, your muscles use up more of the sugar in your blood stream. Over time it can lower blood sugar levels. Exercise also helps make insulin work better. Walking after meals can be helpful in keeping blood sugar levels down.

There are lots of great meal plans and resources online at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

~H. Zuercher

### In this issue:

- ⇒ **November is National Diabetes Month**
- ⇒ **Mental Health matters—Anxiety**
- ⇒ **CFR Research Corner**

### Take Care of Your Body

**EAT** *well*

**Move** *daily*

**DRINK WATER** *often*

**SLEEP** *7-8 hours*

**LOVE** *your body*

*repeat for* **LIFE**

## Mental Health Matters—Anxiety

Many things can cause us to feel anxious—a new job, public speaking, and even watching the news. In fact, in 2020, with all that has occurred since the onset of the pandemic in March, stress, anxiety and other forms of emotional distress have increased in all demographics across the country (e.g., age, race, gender). As we enter into the final months of 2020, we wanted to share more information about anxiety and provide tips to help manage the anxiety so many are facing right now.

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is our body's natural response to stress. Experiencing anxiety every now and then is normal and a part of life; it actually helps us stay alert and aware. Anxiety becomes a problem when there are intense and excessive worries and fears about every day situations that do not go away. Anxiety that interferes with daily activities, is difficult to control, out of proportion to the actual problem at hand, or lasts for a long time can be a sign of an anxiety disorder. Even if you do not have an anxiety disorder, it is important to manage and control anxiety because it can increase blood pressure and blood sugar, cause sleep problems, cause us to eat too much or too little, and have other effects on physical health. It can even begin to affect our relationships with others.

*Please keep reading for tips and strategies.*

### ***Mental Health Matters continued***

**What causes anxiety?** General feelings of anxiety can be caused by stress, the fear of the unknown, or changes happening in our lives. Anxiety disorders can be caused by trauma, stress due to an illness, or stress buildup. People with certain personality types are more likely to have anxiety disorders. Drugs and alcohol can also make anxiety worse.

**How do I know if my anxiety is a problem?** Your anxiety may be a problem if you feel anxious on most days and experience the following symptoms for more than 6 months: worrying about a lot of things, worrying excessively, worrying more days than not, irrational fears, feeling tired, trouble concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, trouble sleeping, and difficulty functioning. If you ever feel like your emotions are interfering with your life, don't be afraid to talk to your doctor. There are many ways to treat anxiety.

**Ways to deal with anxiety:** Everyday anxieties can be managed with some of the following tips:

- ⇒ Take a time out. Remove yourself from the situation that is causing stress or anxiety.
- ⇒ Eat well balanced meals.
- ⇒ Limit alcohol and caffeine which can increase the physical symptoms of anxiety.
- ⇒ Exercise daily and get enough sleep.
- ⇒ Practice deep breathing. Breathe all the way down into your stomach and slowly breathe out.
- ⇒ Distract yourself - count to 10 slowly, think of a relaxing place, sing a song.
- ⇒ Find things to laugh about.
- ⇒ Identify the things you can control and the things that you cannot.
- ⇒ Learn what triggers your anxiety.
- ⇒ Talk to someone - a friend, family member, your doctor, a therapist.

~H. Zuercher

### **5-4-3-2-1 Exercise for Anxiety**

*Take a time out and....*

- ◆ Name 5 things you can SEE
- ◆ Name 4 things you can TOUCH
- ◆ Name 3 things you can HEAR
- ◆ Name 2 things you can SMELL
- ◆ Name 1 thing you can TASTE

## **CFR Research Corner: Connecting Health to Everyday Life Experiences**

*Have you ever wondered why some of CFR's projects measure weight, height, hip/waist and blood pressure, and even collect samples of blood and saliva?*

We know that life is full of challenges; information about how the body responds to life's challenges or stresses provides us with a better understanding of health and illness. When we feel stress our bodies react – sometimes in ways that affect our health. Our researchers want to understand this better and use the biological information collected to assess processes such as metabolism, stress hormone activity, and chronic inflammation. They also examine how genetic processes are affected by stressful environments and how this gene activity affects a range of health related outcomes, including healthy aging.

We are hopeful that this data will allow us to develop health promotion strategies to enhance healthy aging and ultimately play a role in reducing health disparities for African Americans. We are so grateful to all of the participants who contribute to this important work.

***Thank you for taking time to read the CFR News! Visit <https://cfr.uga.edu/for-families-home/> for additional resources. We wish you a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving holiday and look forward to being in touch soon!***