

# Embracing Life with Diabetes

A Quarterly Publication  
for People with Diabetes

Fall 2011

## Coping with Diabetes

**A** diagnosis of diabetes can feel very overwhelming. One of the most difficult things to come to terms with is that diabetes is for life and it requires lifestyle changes in order to manage the disease. Medications, food plans and schedules need to be understood and balanced. You may need to learn how to operate a glucometer or perhaps an insulin pump. Initially this can seem like the disease defines who you are and what you do, but if you give yourself time and take things one step at a time, you will see that you are still the person you have always been ... diabetes is just *one aspect* of your life.

**Stress** can negatively affect your ability to manage diabetes by elevating blood glucose levels. While we cannot eliminate all stress from our lives, we can learn to manage the stressors that we cannot get rid of. Starting an exercise program or joining an activity that interests you are good ways to fight stress. Learn to practice relaxation techniques such as *progressive muscle relaxation, breathing exercises, or positive self-talk* to help yourself feel more calm. Whatever you choose, give yourself time to practice it regularly so it becomes easy to include in your day-to-day life.

Sometimes stress can feel so overwhelming that you struggle to get a grip on it. At those times you may benefit from meeting with a professional counselor who can help you learn new ways of coping or new ways of changing your behavior. It is possible to not only live with diabetes, but to *live well*.

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a great technique for reducing overall body tension. As you reduce the tension you carry in your body, your whole being will feel less stress and you will enjoy increased physical and emotional health. Here's how to get started:

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Time Required:** 5 Minutes

**What You'll Need:**

1. A comfortable place
2. Some privacy
3. A few minutes

#### Here's How:

1. After finding a quiet place and several free minutes to practice progressive muscle relaxation, sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable.
2. Begin by tensing all the muscles in your face. Make a tight grimace, close your eyes as tightly as possible, clench your teeth, even move your ears up if you can. Hold this for the count of eight as you inhale.
3. Now exhale and relax completely. Let your face go completely lax, as though you were sleeping. Feel the tension seep from your facial muscles, and enjoy the feeling.
4. Next, completely tense your neck and shoulders, again inhaling and counting to eight. Then exhale and relax.

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## Progressive Muscle Relaxation *(continued)*

5. Continue down your body, repeating the procedure with the following muscle groups:

- Chest
- Abdomen
- Entire right arm
- Right forearm and hand (making a fist)
- Right hand
- Entire left arm
- Left forearm and hand (again, making a fist)
- Left hand
- Buttocks
- Entire right leg
- Lower right leg and foot
- Right foot
- Entire left leg
- Lower left leg and foot
- Left foot

6. For a shortened version, include just four main muscle groups:

- Face
- Neck, shoulders and arms
- Abdomen and chest
- Buttocks, legs and feet

Quickly focusing on each group one after the other, with practice you can relax your body like “liquid relaxation” poured on your head and flowing down, completely covering you. You can use progressive muscle relaxation to quickly de-stress any time.

## Visualization Breathing

Both visualization and breathing exercises have been found to be great stress relief strategies. Here are some ways that you can use visualization techniques with breathing exercises to achieve quick and effective stress relief.

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Time Required:** 5 minutes or more

### Here's How:

1. *Close Your Eyes And Relax.*  
Let your breathing become slower and deeper.
2. *Practice Stress Relief Breathing.*  
Breathe from your diaphragm or belly instead of from your shoulders or chest. Don't force it, but let your breathing become natural and relaxed.
3. *Visualize.*  
As you breathe in, imagine that 'relaxation' is coming into your body and flowing through your limbs, reaching every part of you. As you exhale, imagine that all the stress from your body is being exhaled. After a few minutes, you should feel more 'full' of peace, and the stress in your body should be reduced.
4. *Or ...*  
As you breathe, imagine that your hands and feet are getting warmer. With practice, this can further reverse your stress response and actually warm your extremities, relaxing your body in the process.

5. *Another idea ...*

Imagine, with each breath, your body is becoming more and more loose. With each exhale, your limbs are a little more like cooked spaghetti, your face a little more expressionless, your body a still pool of water.

6. *Keep breathing.*

For five minutes or twenty, continuing this exercise can relieve stress and help you return to your activities (and stressors) with a renewed sense of strength and serenity.

### Tips:

1. If you're really tired and fear that this will put you to sleep, keep your practice to about 5 minutes, or set an alarm.
2. Conversely, if you're having trouble sleeping, this exercise may prove very helpful.
3. You may also want to try other breathing exercises.



## Positive Self-talk

Patterns of negative or positive self-talk often start in childhood. Usually, the self-talk habit is one that's colored our thinking for years, and can affect us in many ways, influencing the experience of stress to our lives. However, any time can be a good time to change it. Here are some ways you can stop yourself from using negative self-talk and use your mind to boost your productivity and self-esteem, and relieve stress.

### Notice Your Patterns

The first step toward change is to become more aware of the problem. You probably don't realize how often you say negative things in your head, or how much it affects your experience. The following strategies can help you become more conscious of your internal dialogue and its content.

- **Journal writing:** Whether you carry a journal around with you and jot down negative comments when you think them, write a general summary of your thoughts at the end of the day, or just start writing about your feelings on a certain topic and later go back to analyze it for content, journaling can be an effective tool for examining your inner process.
- **Thought stopping:** As you notice yourself saying something negative in your mind, you can stop your thought mid-stream by saying to yourself "Stop". Saying this aloud will be more powerful,

and having to say it aloud will make you more aware of how many times you are stopping negative thoughts, and where.

- **Rubber band snap:** Another therapeutic trick is to walk around with a rubber band around your wrist; as you notice negative self-talk, pull the band away from your skin and let it snap back. It'll hurt a little, and serve as a slightly negative consequence that will both make you more aware of your thoughts, and help to stop them! (Or, if you don't want to subject yourself to walking around with a rubber band on your wrist, you'll be even more careful to limit the negative thoughts!)

### Replace Negative Statements

A good way to stop a bad habit is to replace it with something better. Once you're aware of your internal dialogue, here are some ways to change it:

- **Milder wording:** Have you ever been to a hospital and noticed how the nurses talk about 'discomfort' instead of 'pain'? This is generally done because 'pain' is a much more powerful word, and discussing your 'pain' level can actually make your experience of it more intense than if you're discussing your 'discomfort' level. You can try this strategy in your daily life. In your self-talk, turning more powerful negative words to more neutral ones can actually help

neutralize your experience. Instead of using words like 'hate' and 'angry' (as in, "I hate traffic! It makes me so angry!"), you can use words like 'don't like' and 'annoyed' ("I don't like traffic; it makes me annoyed," sounds much milder, doesn't it?)

- **Change negative to neutral or positive:** As you find yourself mentally complaining about something, rethink your assumptions. Are you assuming something is a negative event when it isn't, necessarily? (For example, having your plans cancelled at the last minute can be seen as a negative, but what you do with your newly-freed schedule can be what you make of it.) The next time you find yourself stressing about something or deciding you're not up to a challenge, stop and rethink, and see if you can come up with a neutral or positive replacement.
- **Change self-limiting statements to questions:** Self-limiting statements like "I can't handle this!" or "This is impossible!" are particularly damaging because they increase your stress in a given situation and they stop you from searching for solutions. The next time you find yourself thinking something that limits the possibilities of a given situation, turn it into a question. Doesn't "How can I handle this?" or "How is this possible?" sound more hopeful and open up your imagination to new possibilities?

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## Ministry Diabetes Services Locations

### Ministry Door County Medical Center

Sturgeon Bay, WI  
920.743.5566

### Ministry Eagle River Memorial Hospital

Eagle River, WI  
715.356.8153

### Howard Young Medical Center

Woodruff, WI  
715.356.8153

### Ministry North Shore Medical Clinic

Fish Creek, WI  
920.868.3511

### Ministry Sacred Heart Hospital

Tomahawk, WI  
715.361.2045

### Saint Elizabeth's Medical Center

Wabasha, MN  
651.565.4531

### Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital

Marshfield, WI  
715.387.7255

### Ministry Medical Group Ministry Saint Mary's Hospital

Rhineland, WI  
715.361.2045

### Ministry Saint Michael's Hospital

Stevens Point, WI  
715.346.5455

[ministryhealth.org](http://ministryhealth.org)

## Continuous Glucose Monitoring: *The Newest Insight for Diabetes*

**H**ave you ever gone to bed with a blood glucose number in the correct range, and woken up to a number 50 points higher? Do you wish you knew what happened to your blood sugar during that time? Have you had a low blood sugar and wondered how many other times this week it had gone low? Or high?

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, then you may be a candidate for a **Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM)**. CGM is one of the latest tools that can help you and your provider decide how to best manage your Diabetes. There are two different types of CGM. The first is a small device that you "rent" from your clinic for 4-7 days. The device is made up of two parts: the *recorder*, which you return back to your clinic, and the *glucose sensor*, which is a tiny tube that goes under your skin to your interstitial fluid. The recorder will track your blood sugars for the entire time you wear the CGM. You then return the recorder to your clinic, where it is downloaded and put into an easy-to-read graph form. You then have a clear picture of your blood sugars over the entire time you have worn the CGM. This makes it easy for your provider to see problem times, such as high blood sugars after certain meals, low blood sugars in the middle of the night, and so on. We will call this the *Professional CGM*.

The second type of CGM goes along with an *insulin pump*. This is essentially the same makeup as the CGM above, but instead of recording the blood sugars, it sends blood sugars to the pump every five minutes. The

pump can then show a graph of the blood sugars for the previous 3, 6, or 9 hours, as desired by the patient. The pump can be set to alarm when blood sugars go above a certain number, or below. This number can be decided by the patient. We will call this the *Personal CGM*.

What about insurance coverage for CGM? According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 87 percent of commercial insurances would have some coverage for both the Professional and Personal CGM. All local Medicare contractors currently cover the Professional CGM.

What is the benefit of CGM? It can be useful in the following conditions and situations: elevated A1C levels, experiencing nighttime hypoglycemia (low blood sugars), helping to detect hypoglycemic unawareness, high blood sugars after eating, frustrating fluctuating glucose levels, and the overall desire for better control.

The overall goal is that CGM will provide more information than your logbook alone. It will show what is happening to blood sugars between readings and in the middle of the night. You, along with your Provider, will then be able to make better decisions on what changes to make to insulin or food intake.

The benefit is summarized in the American Association of Diabetes Educators Consensus Statement, "More consistent CGM use predicts A1C reductions." (2010)