



DIABETES, YOUR BODY, AND MENTAL HEALTH:

Understanding The Bigger Picture

Diabetes impacts every part of the body. Because blood runs through every cell and tissue in your body, when blood sugar levels rise, excess sugar causes cellular damage that adversely impacts blood vessels, nerves, and other organs. Here's how diabetes can affect the different parts of your body:

HEART HEALTH

People with diabetes are up to four times more likely to develop heart disease. Risk factors that make people susceptible to diabetes include: obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, and elevated blood sugar levels. They may also have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and other conditions that increase their risk for heart disease. Subsequently, heart disease is the leading cause of death for people who have diabetes.



FOOT HEALTH

High blood sugar levels can also damage nerves in the feet, making it hard to feel sensations like pain and temperature changes. Foot injuries can escalate in severity without a diabetic realizing something is wrong. That's why healthcare providers check diabetic patients' feet during regular checkups. Untreated foot injuries may lead to severe infections and in some cases, even resulting in amputation.



FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

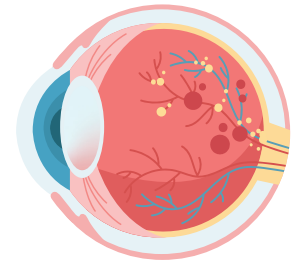
We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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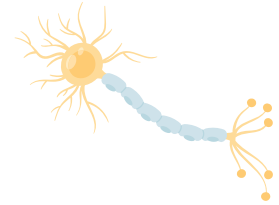
EYE HEALTH

Elevated blood sugar levels affect tissues throughout the body. However, for diabetics, eye damage is especially concerning. It can cause diabetes-related macular edema or diabetes-related retinopathy, both of which can ultimately lead to vision loss. If you're concerned diabetes may be affecting your eye health, schedule an appointment to see your optometrist and or ophthalmologist as soon as possible.



NERVE HEALTH

Diabetes can cause diabetic neuropathy, a condition that leads to nerve damage. Initial symptoms may include pain and tingly sensations in the legs, hands, and feet, and other extremities. Diabetic neuropathy can even adversely impact the bladder, digestive system, heart, and eyes.



Diabetes permanently impacts all tissues and organs in the body. Damage isn't confined to any organ or part of the body. To learn more about diabetes and cultivating a healthy lifestyle, schedule an appointment with your Primary Care Physician (PCP). If you do not have a PCP, you may call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or **log on to Blue Access for MembersSM (BAMSM) [bcbsil.com](https://www.bcbsil.com)** and use the Provider Finder. This fast, easy-to-use tool improves members' experience when searching for in-network healthcare providers.



SOURCES: [HopkinsMedicine.org](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org), [Diabetes.org](https://www.diabetes.org), [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org), [MayoClinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org), [MHANational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)

MENTAL HEALTH & DIABETES

Your mental and physical health are inextricably linked. When your physical health suffers, your mental health does too—and vice versa. This is especially true when a chronic illness like diabetes is involved.

According to Mental Health America, people who have diabetes are more likely to have depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Stress from managing diabetes and changes in blood sugar levels have a direct and immediate impact on mood and cognition, called diabetes distress.

If you or a loved one has diabetes, it's critical to talk to your healthcare provider about your condition as well as its effect on your mental health. They can help connect you with resources to help you cope, like a therapist or support group. The ComPsych GuidanceResources® Employee Assistance Program is also a resource option for all Cook County employees and their dependents.

ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK

To access GuidanceResources® services:

- **Call 1-800-890-1213.** You'll speak with a highly trained, caring professional who can listen to your concerns and guide you to the appropriate services
- Visit GuidanceResources® Online at www.guidanceresources.com and enter **Web ID: BCBSILEAP**



MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH WITH DIABETES:

Having a chronic illness like diabetes has a direct impact on your mental health. Whether you're experiencing feelings of depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns, you can get help. Here are some resources at your disposal:

- Join a support group
- Use strategies to reduce stress (intentional deep breathing, journaling, art therapy)
- Talk to a trusted friend or loved one
- Consider getting help from a therapist

