Four Steps to Take If You Have Diabetes and Fatigue

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The Link Between Diabetes and Fatigue

There are many reasons why you may suffer from fatigue if you have diabetes, and the solutions depend upon the causes. Fatigue may be directly related to your diabetes or may originate from other causes.

1. Keep a Journal to Determine Cause

While this may seem difficult when you are already tired, consider keeping a symptom journal for a week or two. A journal will help you to identify patterns related to your fatigue and it doesn't have to be complicated or burdensome.

Each day, record how you feel in general, Note your energy levels. You could make a simple numerical scale to rate them. For example, if you are totally exhausted and can’t drag yourself from bed, you may rate your energy level as the number 1. Average energy may be a 3 and vibrant feelings of wellness could be a 5.

Note your energy levels throughout the day in addition to documenting an overall rating.

Also write down what you eat. This can be listed as a simple healthy/not healthy, rating, however writing down what you actually eat is likely to be more revealing. Record exercise, activities, and stress levels. You may write in detail or develop a simple rating scale.

The purpose of the journal is to identify patterns that influence your energy levels. For example, you may find that you become tired at a certain time of day. This might occur because of a drop in blood sugar due to missed meals, vigorous exercise, or the peak effect of a medication which you take to control your blood sugar. It may be due to poor sleep, interaction with a difficult individual, or being sedentary.

Your journal will provide clues that point to the root cause of your fatigue. Once you know why you are tired, you will be able to take steps to prevent and relieve fatigue.

2. See Your Health Care Provider

Consult with your health care provider if fatigue is interfering with the quality of your life. If you have been keeping a journal, you may want to provide your doctor with a summary of your findings.

While diabetes and fatigue can go together, there are also many underlying health issues that can contribute to feelings of tiredness. Depression, anemia and hypothyroidism are just a few of the health issues that may result in fatigue.

Additionally, as a person who has diabetes, you are at risk for developing heart disease. Fatigue may be a sign of an irregular heartbeat as well as other cardiac issues. If you are a smoker, you are more likely to develop cardiac

problems too.

Diabetes can result in damage to the kidneys. If your kidneys are not functioning correctly, you may feel tired. How is your weight? If you are overweight, you may suffer from feeling tired frequently. Do you think that you might be pregnant? Are you approaching or going through menopause?

How do you feel in general? Have people close to you been ill lately? Do you think that you are fighting off a cold or other infection? Common illnesses can make you feel tired. Fatigue is often the first symptom experienced before the onset of an illness.

It is important that any medical issues be ruled out or addressed.

3. Watch Your Blood Sugar

If your blood sugar level is too low, you will be tired. Other signs of low blood sugar include feeling anxious, shaky, and lightheaded. You may perspire heavily, be irritable, and develop a headache.

Additional signs of low blood sugar include feelings of hunger, an elevated heart rate, and experiencing a tingling sensation around your mouth.

If you think that your blood sugar is low and you have a glucose meter, check your blood sugar level. If it is below 80, consume 15 grams of a carbohydrate. Fifteen grams equals three glucose tablets, ½ cup of orange juice, four teaspoons of sugar, or four pieces of hard candy.

Recheck your blood sugar level in fifteen minutes. If it is still low, have another fifteen grams of carbohydrate. After your blood sugar level returns to normal, have a snack that contains protein. Good choices include half of a sandwich, cheese, and crackers or a glass of low-fat milk.

Next page: more on watching your blood sugars, and more combatting diabetes and fatigue tips.

3. Watch Your Blood Sugar

Your blood sugar level may be low for several reasons. Ask yourself the following questions if your blood sugar is low:

- Have you skipped meals or had no carbohydrates at your last meal?
- Do you normally have a snack, which you skipped today?
- Has your medication recently been changed?
- Did you take your medication as it was prescribed?
- Have you been exercising more than usual?
- Have you been consuming alcohol?

All of these factors affect blood sugar levels.

4. Evaluate Your Activity Level

Your activity level may also be making you feel tired. Too much and not enough exercise can both result in fatigue.

Are You Sitting Too Much?

Studies have revealed that too much sitting increases the likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes, elevated levels of triglycerides, and increased cholesterol levels. It may also make you feel tired, particularly if you work at a computer screen, are doing tasks you find boring, or doing work that requires a high level of concentration.

One study discovered that inflammation increases during prolonged sitting. This was particularly noticeable among women. The researchers found that the risk factors occurred even if participants exercised regularly yet spent most of the day sitting. They recommended moving around throughout the day as a means to improve wellness.

In addition to reducing the risks of illness, intermittent moving around may boost your energy levels. So get up, take short walks, stretch, look out the window, or even fidget in your chair. You may find that these simple techniques refresh you. Experts now recommend a minimum 150 minutes of exercise each week to maintain health.

Or Burning up Too Much Energy?

Before beginning an exercise program, check with your endocrinologist if you have type 1 diabetes, poorly controlled blood glucose levels, or have other health issues. You may need to increase your carbohydrate intake if you engage in exercise. Find out what your health care practitioner recommends.

If you are exercising vigorously and experiencing low blood sugar symptoms such as fatigue or lightheadedness, you need to consume a carbohydrate before or while you are exercising.

Generally speaking, you do not need additional carbohydrates if you are engaging in light exercise, such as walking, gardening or shopping for one half hour or less. If you are planning to engage in vigorous exercise for up to 30 minutes, have two portions of fruit prior to exercising.

For strenuous exercise, such as running, which lasts between 45 minutes to 60/75 minutes, have a balanced snack, such as a sandwich made with two ounces of meat, one cup of milk, and a piece of fruit prior to exercising. When you are done exercising vigorously, have 6 oz. of orange juice.

Be aware that you may or may not experience fatigue and other signs of low blood sugar during or immediately after exercising. If you are insulin dependent, or taking medications to lower your blood sugar, hypoglycemia may occur several hours after you stop exercising.

Conclusion

As someone who has diabetes; low blood sugar and other health aspects related to your diagnosis may cause tiredness. Conditions that cause fatigue may be entirely unrelated to diabetes as well. Determine the cause of your tiredness and then you will be able to implement a plan to restore your feelings of energy once again.