

Useful Aotearoa New Zealand Resources for Carers and Whānau:

Healthify—Information about types of diabetes:

<https://healthify.nz/health-a-z/d/diabetes-overview>

Eating Disorders Association of New Zealand:

www.ed.org.nz

Diabetes New Zealand

www.diabetes.org.nz

If you are worried about the safety of yourself or a whānau member (e.g., thoughts of suicide) contact the suicide crisis numbers:

- **Suicide Prevention Helpline**
 - 0508 828 865
 - 0508 TAUTOKO
- 1737 – Need to Talk?
- Lifeline Aotearoa 0800 543 354

Carers and Whānau:

Supporting loved ones living with diabetes who are coping with eating behaviours and body satisfaction

Are you worried about a loved one's eating behaviours, body satisfaction or diabetes management?

Challenges with eating and body satisfaction can happen for people with any type of diabetes. It also does not matter how long they have had diabetes, their gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity or culture.

Diabetes places a lot of focus on:

- Planning meals and snacks
- Weight
- Carbohydrate counting
- Body image
- Numbers
- Checking/monitoring
- Medications
- Testing (such as blood tests for HbA1c and complications, blood glucose levels)
- Body not working like it used to and what this means for the future

- Providing a safe, open space to talk.
- Offer to support them to get help. *You can do this by talking to their diabetes team, or general practitioner about these concerns.*
- Being non-judgemental when they discuss their struggles. *Acknowledge that they are struggling and be curious rather than disagreeing with them making statements.*
- Remember this is something they need help with, it's not their fault.
- Seek support for yourself – someone you can talk to about the way you are feeling and coping.
- Reflect as a whānau on your own beliefs and behaviours around food.
- Offer to go with them to their appointments. It can be very hard to open up and talk about these concerns due to the associated stigma and shame.
- Put aside time regularly (weekly or a few times a week) where the challenges are discussed as a whānau. Outside of this time, keep your focus on things other than weight, food, bodies and diabetes. Focussing too much on challenges can make it harder or more stressful for the your loved one.
- Acknowledge the hard work your loved one is doing and celebrate wins no matter how “small” they seem.
- Tell the person you love them and are there to support them.
- Help your loved one to identify a friend or relative they are comfortable talking to that can offer support.
- Learn more about these struggles.

How can you help?

It can be hard to be around people facing these challenges as they are really struggling and sometimes do not want to talk about how they might be feeling. They also may not act like themselves. It is normal to feel frustrated, worried, sad, guilty, hopeless, tired and/or stressed. There are things you can do to help such as:

A person with diabetes and their whānau can feel a lot of pressure to manage diabetes “perfectly”.

This pressure can come from health care providers, whānau, peers, society, social media, and even the person with diabetes themselves.

It can cause people with diabetes to develop unhelpful thoughts and behaviours related to eating, diabetes and body satisfaction.

The following can be warning signs for people living with any type of diabetes. Have you noticed any of these things in your loved one? You may have noticed changes in beliefs, behaviours and/or relationships.

Physical Signs:

- Unexplained and/or intentional weight changes
- Persistently high blood glucose - symptoms include urinating (peeing) frequently, thirsty, feeling tired
- Multiple episodes of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) or near DKA
- without a known cause
- Frequent episodes of nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting
- Fatigue (tiredness)

Emotional Signs

- Fear of eating food, or gaining weight
- Irritability and/or mood swings
- Low mood and/or worrying
- Expressing concerns about weight or appearance
- Fear of hypoglycaemia

Behavioural Signs

- Avoiding health-related appointments
- Hiding things related to eating and diabetes
- Missing whānau occasions or events that involve eating and/or using insulin in front of others
- Providing food for others but they won't sit down to eat with you
- Avoidance of some food groups/types e.g., carbohydrates
- Restricting food intake
- Not filling insulin prescriptions
- Missing taking their insulin
- Changing diabetes management against recommendations of their health care team
- Weighing themselves frequently
- Exercising more frequently
- Showing an increased interest in weight, food, dieting and/or exercise