

Types of Screening for Adolescents with Diabetes: Addressing the Holistic Needs of Adolescents Living with Diabetes

Marisa Salas-Silva, LCSW

Today's Objectives

1. This presentation will cover the importance of screening for both diabetes-related health issues and mental health in adolescents.
2. Equip healthcare providers, caregivers, and school staff with knowledge on screening tools and mental health resources to improve outcomes in adolescents with diabetes.

Types of Diabetes

- Type 1 Diabetes (T1D): An autoimmune disease where the pancreas produces little or no insulin. It is usually diagnosed in childhood or adolescence.
- Type 2 Diabetes (T2D): A condition where the body does not use insulin effectively (insulin resistance), often linked to lifestyle factors.

Impact

Physical and Emotional Challenges:

- Adolescents face the challenge of monitoring blood sugar levels, taking medication, problem-solving diabetes technology, diabetes related communication with caregivers, lifestyle adjustments, etc.
- Growth and puberty: hormonal changes during adolescence can make blood glucose control more challenging, due to fluctuations with high and low blood sugars.
- Energy and activity: hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia can impact energy levels.
- Diabetes technology is a great tool but can also cause distress.
- Risk of complications, such as neuropathy, retinopathy, and cardiovascular disease, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety.
- Adolescents may resist parental supervision in diabetes care, sometimes leading to risky behaviors with management.

Link Between Mental Health and Diabetes

- Studies show that adolescents with diabetes are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other emotional distress than their peers without diabetes.
- Daily management of diabetes can lead to “diabetes burnout,” a state of emotional exhaustion that negatively affects involvement with caring for the diabetes.
- Fear of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) or hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) and the long-term complications of diabetes can cause anxiety and stress.
- Peer stigma and the emotional burden of chronic illness may impact self-esteem and social relationships.
- Mental health can interfere with diabetes management, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased hospitalizations.



Mental Health Screening

- Depression: The Patient Health Questionnaire for Adolescents (PHQ-9) is commonly used to assess the presence of depressive symptoms.
<https://www.apa.org/depression-guideline/patient-health-questionnaire.pdf>
- Anxiety: The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) screens for symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, which is common in adolescents with diabetes.
<https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/gad-7-anxiety-scale.pdf>
- Diabetes Distress Scale: Measures the emotional burden of managing diabetes, helping to identify individuals who may benefit from further psychological support.

https://professional.diabetes.org/sites/default/files/media/ada_mental_health_workbook_chapter_3.pdf

Importance of Early Screening

- Early identification of diabetes distress and mental health issues leads to earlier intervention, which can improve overall quality of life.
- Adolescents who receive appropriate mental health support are more likely to engage with their diabetes management plan.
- Mental health support can help adolescents cope with the psychological challenges of living with a chronic illness.
- Addressing both physical and mental health early on reduces the risk of long-term complications.

Barriers to Effective Screening

- **Stigma:** Mental health issues in adolescents with chronic conditions are often stigmatized, preventing open discussion and screening.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Some healthcare providers may not routinely screen for mental health conditions, focusing solely on diabetes management.
- **Limited Resources:** In some areas, access to mental health services is limited, particularly in rural or underserved communities.
- **Insurance and Cost:** Many adolescents and families face barriers to accessing mental health services due to cost or lack of insurance coverage.

Resources to Support Emotional and Behavioral Health

Insurance:

- Private Insurance
- Medi-Cal

Sutter PENS Clinic Resources:

- Behavioral Health Clinic-covered by California Children's Services (CCS)
- Scout by Sutter Health

Support Groups:

- T1D Teen Connect

Coaching Groups:

- Risley Health
<https://www.riselyhealth.com/>

- Ask the Therapist

<https://www.breakthrought1d.org/northernca/events/ask-the-therapist/>

Diabetes Camps:

- Bearskin Meadow Camp
- Camp Loma Mar
- Camp at Mt. Gilead
- Camp Jones Gulch
- Camp Arroyo

Individual, family camp, buddy camp, etc. (<https://dyf.org/>)

Sources

American Diabetes Association. (n.d.). *Diabetes and mental health*. <https://www.diabetes.org/healthy-living/mental-health>

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2019, December). *The rising burden of type 2 diabetes in adolescents*. Pediatrics. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/12/12/peds.2019-2720>

American Psychological Association. (2018, December). *Depression screening and treatment*. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/12/depression-screening>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Type 2 diabetes*. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/type2.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Child and adolescent diabetes statistics*. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/statistics/children.html>

Journal of Diabetes Research. (2017). *Mental health in adolescents with diabetes*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5442322/>

Diabetes Care. (2006). *Psychosocial issues in adolescents with diabetes: Impact on management and adherence*. <https://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/29/4/899>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. (n.d.). *Diabetes complications*. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/managing-diabetes>

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Depression in adolescents*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression>

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Mental health and chronic illness*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-and-illness>

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2018, October). *School-based mental health programs*. <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2018/Adolescent-School-Mental-Health>

PubMed Central. (2001). *Generalized anxiety disorder screening with GAD-7*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17577715/>

PubMed. (2016). *Diabetes distress and its relationship to depressive symptoms in adolescents*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27167959/>

U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. (2015). *Mental health issues in adolescents with chronic diseases*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25900743/>

Thank You

