

Transcript of Marilia Calcia

Hello. I'm Marilia Calcia. I'm a psychiatry at the diabetes service at Kings College Hospital. The coronavirus pandemic has created anxiety you know many of us for people with diabetes, there is an additional worry, which is the fact that diabetes appears to be linked to more serious forms of coronavirus related illness into a higher risk of requiring hospital admission.

Diabetes can change the way the body fights off infections, particularly by affecting the functioning of the white blood cells, which are the cells that respond to viruses and other microorganisms. Maintaining your blood sugar within your target range, most of the time, tends to reduce the risk of infections in general. Having said that, people with diabetes are a large and diverse group in terms of age, diabetes type, and whether or not they have other health conditions. There are also many other factors that influence our response to infection, some of which are not related to diabetes at all. For these reasons, it's difficult to say what the current date and means for each person with diabetes individually.

As a psychiatrist working in the diabetes services, I am very aware that people with diabetes often feel criticized when it comes to the way they manage their condition. That, along with the balancing act of trying to avoid letting their blood sugar go too low or too high, can lead to diabetes related distress, which is when people feel frustrated and upset by the demands of the diabetes. This can also trigger mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression.

My advice to people with diabetes during the pandemic is to focus on the basics to keep yourself safe. Start with taking a moment to think about you sleep, exercise and meals routines and whether they have changed since the pandemic started. These factors influenced not only our mood and stress levels, but also blood sugar. Your routine doesn't have to be perfect. The try and make it consistent if you can so you can plan ahead and manage your medication more easily.

It's also important to monitor for signs of high blood sugar, particularly if you have symptoms of coronavirus or of any other infection. If you usually test your blood sugar at home, try to test it a little more often now. If you don't normally test your blood sugar at home, learn how to recognise signs of high blood sugar such as tiredness, extreme thirst, frequent urination, headaches, and nausea. If you have any of these symptoms, make sure you drink plenty of water and talk to health care professional for more advice.

It's a difficult time for everyone, and it's OK not to do everything perfectly. Talk to people you trust and be open about the demands of living with diabetes during the pandemic. If things are getting difficult and if you feel that you're struggling with your mental health and can't keep on top of your basic diabetes care, please talk to a health care professional and try to get support early.