

Diabetes Stigma



A Resource for Healthcare Heroes

Tackling diabetes stigma with
care and compassion

dStigmatize

What is Diabetes Stigma?

Diabetes stigma refers to negative social judgments, stereotypes, and prejudices about diabetes, or about a person due to their diabetes.¹ Diabetes stigma becomes discrimination when it is used in unfair or prejudicial treatment towards a person with diabetes.¹



4 in 5
people with diabetes
report experiencing
diabetes stigma

Why does diabetes stigma exist?

Most health-related stigma, including diabetes stigma, is caused by shame, blame, fear, and disgust that arises from negative stereotypes and misinformation.¹⁻³

These stereotypes and misinformation are often amplified by media messaging and public discourse, health organizations and health professionals, cultural and social norms, policy, and law.

What does diabetes stigma look like?

Internalized stigma



Interactions with others



In healthcare



In the media and pop culture



In education and employment

Those loud beeping noises from your insulin pump are such a distraction during meetings, can't you just turn them off?

???



In our language



“ Tom is a **diabetic** and he **failed** to adhere to his treatment plan. He is **non-compliant** and **difficult**. ”

In the diabetes community

It wasn't my fault that I got type 1 diabetes and I hate that we're lumped in with those lazy people who bring their type 2 diabetes on themselves.



What is the impact of diabetes stigma?

Psychological well-being



Diabetes stigma is associated with:

- Increased depressive and anxiety symptoms,⁴
- Increased diabetes distress,⁴
- Decreased quality of life,⁵
- Decreased self-esteem,⁴ self-efficacy,⁶ and resilience.⁷



Social well-being



Diabetes stigma is associated with:

- Social withdrawal or isolation,⁸
- Worse interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and health professionals,^{6,8,9}
- Concealing diabetes from others.¹⁰

Physical well-being and self-care



Diabetes stigma is associated with:

- Higher HbA1c,¹¹
- Higher BMI,¹²
- More frequent severe hypoglycemia,¹¹ diabetes-related ketoacidosis (DKA),¹¹ retinopathy,¹¹ hospitalizations,¹³
- Avoiding diabetes self-care behaviors including monitoring glucose levels, delivering insulin, and taking diabetes medications,¹⁰
- Avoiding healthcare appointments and screenings (for diabetes or diabetes-related complications).¹⁴

Citations:

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Ignorance perpetuates diabetes stigma.

The first step to address diabetes stigma is to understand what it is and how it affects people. Visit the [dStigmatize Resource Library](https://dstigmatize.org/resources) to learn more.



dstigmatize.org/resources



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