

## Facing life with diabetes

### ***World Diabetes Day: 14 November 2017***

**14 November 2017:** Research shows that the diagnosis of diabetes can come as a shock, and initial emotional reactions can include disbelief, anger, self-blame and anxiety. It may also come with a sense of relief after a period of unexplained symptoms.

Dr Adriana Ventura, Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD) and registered psychologist, says life with diabetes is different for everyone and reactions to a diagnosis will vary, but most people with diabetes will need support from their healthcare professionals, families and peers at some point.

“How a person responds to diabetes is influenced by individual characteristics, such as age, gender, social and cultural background, their life stage and experiences, as well as competing priorities,” said Dr Ventura.

A resource from the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) highlights the emotional impact of living with and managing diabetes. The resource, which was developed by the ACBRD in collaboration with Diabetes Australia, is titled: ***Diabetes and emotional health: A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes.***

***The Facing life with diabetes*** chapter in the handbook provides healthcare professionals with practical information and tools to help people with diabetes adjust to their diagnosis, and start a life-long relationship with their healthcare professionals.

“This new resource helps healthcare professionals to offer psychological support to people with a new diagnosis of diabetes. It is a guide for health professionals to have conversations about diabetes during consultations and discuss effective strategies to face life with this challenging condition,” Dr Ventura added.

Diabetes Victoria is celebrating this year’s *World Diabetes Day* today and the 2017 theme is: *To the women of diabetes – thank you.* We are taking the opportunity to recognise the day-to-day achievements of women in diabetes – many of which go unnoticed. Half of people with diabetes are women, many more care for very young children with diabetes in their family, while others work as health professionals (endocrinologists, GPs, diabetes nurse educators) and researchers. This year we want to thank all women who are touched by diabetes in some way. Many people with diabetes describe it as “more than a full-time job” without the assurance that your efforts will be rewarded.

Renza Scibilia has lived with type 1 diabetes since 1998. She speaks a lot about diabetes, presenting regularly at conferences in Australia and globally, and is a proud member of the

*Diabetes Online Community*. Renza is a diabetes consumer representative and a strong advocate for ensuring the voice of the person living with diabetes is heard loud and clear. An excerpt from Renza's blog *Diabetogenic*, entitled 'Dear Doctor', features in the ***Facing Life with Diabetes*** chapter.

"As a woman living with type 1 diabetes I need things from my healthcare professionals and they need things from me, so mutual respect and lack of judgement is crucial to make the ongoing relationship work," said Ms Scibilia. "Diabetes is scary, it is an unwelcome part of my present and my future, so it is critical I have a support network of people living with diabetes from all around the globe."

Our research has found:

- Almost 320,000 Victorians are currently registered on the NDSS. More than 151,000 women in Victoria are currently living with diabetes – be it type 1, type 2 or gestational diabetes. (Source: NDSS)
- In the past 12 months, more than 9,300 women in Victoria have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes, which can cause an increased risk of complications in pregnancy and birth. We also know that 1 in 2 women with gestational diabetes will go on to develop type 2 diabetes later in life. (Source: NDSS)
- Women with type 2 diabetes are almost 10 times more likely to have coronary heart disease than women without the condition. (Source: IDF)
- Women with type 1 diabetes have an increased risk of early miscarriage or having a baby with malformations. (Source: IDF)
- Taking care of diabetes, including the emotional aspects of diabetes, can significantly minimize or prevent complications.

**Electronic copies of the *Diabetes and Emotional Health* handbook and toolkit for health professionals are free and can be accessed here:**

[www.ndss.com.au/online-resources-for-health-professionals](http://www.ndss.com.au/online-resources-for-health-professionals).

The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD) is a partnership for better health between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University.

The National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) is an initiative of the Australian Government administered with the assistance of Diabetes Australia.

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**Notes to editors:**

- The handbook provides healthcare professionals with strategies and tools to better recognise emotional problems and to work with people with diabetes to reduce the significant psychological burden that can be caused by diabetes.
- This handbook and factsheet were developed as part of the *NDSS Mental Health and Diabetes National Development Programme*. They were developed in collaboration with the ACBRD.
- The handbook has undergone evaluation, which involved interviews with healthcare professionals (e.g. diabetes educators, GPs, nurses, dietitians, endocrinologists) and people with diabetes, who read and commented on draft copies of the handbook.
- Mental healthcare for people with diabetes is recognised as a priority area in the Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016–2020 – see the [report here](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nds-2016-2020): <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nds-2016-2020>
- Diabetes is a progressive and complex condition, which can result in serious health complications.
- In Australia, around 1.7 million people are living with diabetes and a further 299 develop diabetes every day.
- *World Diabetes Day* is the leading global diabetes awareness and advocacy campaign, officially recognised by the United Nations and led by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF).
- It is the world's largest diabetes awareness campaign reaching a global audience of over 1 billion people in more than 160 countries. The campaign draws attention to issues of paramount importance to the diabetes world and keeps diabetes firmly in the public and political spotlight.
- Every year, Diabetes Victoria participates in the 'Blue Monument Challenge' for World Diabetes Day.
- The 'Blue Monument Challenge' was launched in 2007 to mark the first United Nations observed World Diabetes Day. Since then, thousands of iconic sites and buildings in over 80 countries have gone blue to raise awareness for diabetes.
- To draw attention to this year's theme of thanking women in diabetes, Diabetes Victoria will light up the Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust building in blue on Tuesday 14 November 2017.

**For more information:**

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