

People with diabetes are twice as likely as the average person to have depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

“Depression is a black hole. It can take the joy out of life,” said Scot L. Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. “It can drain energy and motivation and cause feelings of hopelessness. Even worse, depression can make the task of managing diabetes much more difficult.”

“Research shows that people with depression are more likely to skip medications, get little exercise, have an unhealthy diet, and have difficulty managing their weight,” said Dr. Joann Schaefer, chief medical officer and director of the Division of Public Health. “In addition, chronically high blood glucose levels may worsen depressive symptoms. It’s important to address both the diabetes and the depression for a long-term health gain.”

When combined with diabetes, depression contributes directly to poorer blood glucose control, more frequent hospital visits, higher risk of long-term complications (such as heart disease and retinopathy) and a shorter life span.

Adhering to a nutritional diet, monitoring blood glucose levels and dealing with diabetes complications can be burdensome for people with depression.

Studies have shown that people with diabetes and depression have more severe diabetes symptoms than people who have diabetes alone.

“Too many people never seek treatment for depression,” Adams said. “As a result, they suffer with depression unnecessarily and for far too long.”

“Good treatment for depression leads to good treatment for diabetes,” Dr. Schaefer said.

“It will help people with diabetes feel better, have more energy and concentration, and have more motivation to take care of themselves.”