

# The Channel™

## A Guide for Women with Diabetes

### Top Story: Diabetes Can Affect Women's Sexual Health

Sex is an important part of life and relationships. But diabetes can affect a woman's sex life. Some women with diabetes have less interest in sex because of depression or frequent yeast infections. High blood sugar levels can make some women feel tired all the time. Or perhaps intercourse is painful because of vaginal dryness.

Problems with having sex aren't a normal part of getting older and don't happen to all women who have diabetes. There is hope. Talk with your health care team about treatments.

### Special Message

If you find that you don't enjoy sex anymore, it's normal to feel upset. You may blame yourself or your partner. Some women feel angry or depressed. These feelings can make it hard for you to talk openly with your partner. Don't give up! Find someone on your health care team to talk with. Learn about medicines or counseling that can help.



## Diabetes Matters

The talk show about diabetes, featuring diabetes educator Fran Tate, CDE, and her guests.

### When Women Are Too Embarrassed to Talk About It

**Fran:** Good morning, everyone. Today's guest is Laura Jackson. Laura has had type 2 diabetes for 15 years. She's here to talk about how diabetes has affected her.

**Laura:** Fran, it's not easy to talk about this. But I do have an important message for women with diabetes. I've learned that diabetes can affect your whole life, even your sex life.

**Fran:** What was your experience, Laura?

*Continued inside...*

## Diabetes Matters, continued...

**Laura:** For one thing, I was getting yeast infections several times a year. You can imagine that I didn't feel very sexy. I really didn't want to have sex while I was on medicine for yeast infections. My husband understood. He's a great guy. But I still blamed myself and my diabetes.

**Fran:** Did diabetes affect your relationship in other ways?

**Laura:** Yes, it did. In the last couple of years, I didn't enjoy sex as much. My husband thought it was his fault. Neither of us knew what to do. I was too embarrassed to talk about it. So I just stayed away from him.

**Fran:** What happened next?

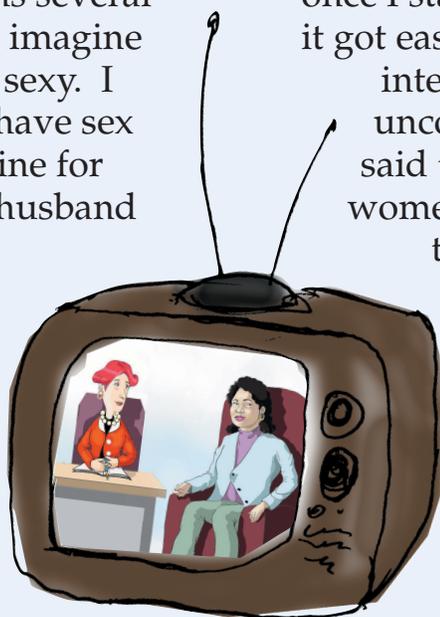
**Laura:** I saw an article about how diabetes affects women and their sexual health. So I decided to tell my doctor what was worrying me.

At first I was embarrassed. But once I started talking with her, it got easier. I told her that intercourse had been uncomfortable for me. She said that diabetes can cause women to have problems with their sex life. Many women with diabetes, especially those close to menopause, have a problem with vaginal dryness. I learned about a cream that will help so my vagina won't feel so dry. I was so relieved to find something that could help.

**Fran:** What did she say about your frequent yeast infections?

**Laura:** She said that when blood sugars are high, yeast infections and bladder infections are more common. My last A-1-C was higher than I wanted it to be. So we talked about adding a new diabetes pill to my care plan. I'll also see my dietitian so we can update my meal plan.

**Fran:** Laura, thanks for coming here today. It took a lot of courage for you to talk about how you faced these very personal problems. Your message gives hope to other women who are in the same situation.



## Baby Watch

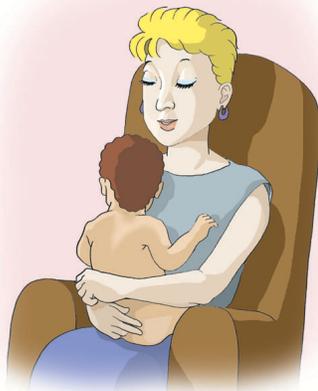
Are you thinking about having a baby? Start working with your health care team before you get pregnant. Have your A-1-C, blood pressure, heart, kidneys, nerves, and eyes checked. See your dietitian to review your meal plan. Talk with your health care team about how being pregnant will affect your long-term health. If you take diabetes pills, you may need to switch to insulin to protect the baby. You may be referred to a special diabetes and pregnancy team.

You will help keep yourself and your baby healthy and safe if you keep your blood sugar in your target range before you get pregnant and until the baby arrives. That will lower your chances of having a premature baby or a baby that's larger than normal. You'll also lower the risk of having a baby with birth defects by keeping your blood sugar close to normal in the first few weeks of pregnancy.

Today, more women with diabetes are able to have healthy babies. With planning and hard work, you can too.

## The Birth Control Files

If you don't want to get pregnant, you'll need to use some kind of birth control. Even if you don't have regular periods, you can still get pregnant. Most birth control methods are safe for women with diabetes. Talk with your health care team about your options.



## Everybody Has Hormones

Some women find it hard to keep their blood sugar on track the week before and during their menstrual period. Your blood sugar levels may go up and down because of changes in hormone levels.

Make a note of the days when you're having your period in your blood sugar record book. Look for patterns. Then talk with your health care team about changing your care plan before, during, or after your period to keep your blood sugar levels on target.

## The Inside Story: Depression and Anxiety

Both depression and anxiety can take away your desire for sex. Medicine or counseling can help with both depression and anxiety disorder. If you've been feeling depressed or worried for more than two weeks, talk with your health care team.

## **News Flash!**

- Work with your health care team to keep your blood sugar on target during your monthly cycles.
- Talk with your health care team about hormone replacement therapy as you get close to menopause.

## A New Life to Live: Menopause

Menopause (MEN-oh-paws), also called change of life, can affect your blood sugar. As your hormone levels change, you may also have hot flashes or other signs.

Talk with your health care team about whether hormone replacement therapy (hormone pills or patches) is right for you. You also may need a change in your diabetes medicines because changes in hormone levels can affect blood sugar. Some women find that they gain weight during menopause. Changing your meal plan or exercise routine can help you keep your weight where you want it.

## You're the Director!

Put a checkmark next to the things you want to talk about with your health care team. Find a member of your team you feel comfortable with. Take this list with you so you remember to talk about the things you checked.

- I have irregular periods.
- It's hard to reach my blood sugar targets before or during my period.
- I often have yeast infections.
- I'd like to find out about birth control.
- I'd like to have a baby.
- I think I'm pregnant.
- Sex is painful for me.
- I don't enjoy sex as much as I did before.
- I'm less interested in sex than before.
- I'm going through the change of life. I would like to know about taking hormones.
- I've been feeling very sad for more than two weeks.
- I often feel very worried.
- I feel like I just can't cope.



## Tune in to learn more:

To get more information about diabetes, contact the American Diabetes Association:

- Call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383)
- Ask for a copy of "A Guide to Emotions and Diabetes"
- Go to [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

Notes:

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My health care professional



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