

Study finds type 1 and type 2 diabetes are equally psychologically challenging in young adults

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Dr Jessica Browne

New research shows that young adults with type 2 diabetes experience similar levels of depression and anxiety symptoms as young adults with type 1 diabetes, according to a world-first study published in Diabetic Medicine journal.

The study was performed by The Australian Centre for Behavioural

Research in Diabetes and its release coincides with Mental Health Week commencing 6 October.

Lead researcher and Research Fellow at Deakin University's School of Psychology, Dr Jessica Browne said: "People often perceive type 1 [diabetes](#) to be more serious and more demanding than type 2 diabetes. But the results of our study show that young adults with type 2 diabetes are as depressed and anxious as age-matched adults with type 1 diabetes. This suggests that, in terms of their [mental health](#), young adults with type 2 diabetes are more similar to young adults with type 1 diabetes than to older adults with type 2 diabetes.

"This has implications for the provision of healthcare services and support for young adults with type 2 diabetes, who may need more intensive psychological and self-care support than previously thought.

"As the number of young adults with type 2 diabetes continues to rise, healthcare providers need to consider the ways in which information, support and services can be tailored to meet the needs of these young adults."

What is diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is the form of diabetes that is related to ageing, family history and lifestyle factors (overweight and inactivity). It occurs when the insulin is not working effectively ([insulin resistance](#)) or the pancreas does not produce sufficient insulin (or a combination of both). People with type 2 diabetes typically modify their diet and activity levels and use tablets to manage their diabetes. Around 1 in 4 require insulin to manage their diabetes effectively. Around 85 per cent of people with diabetes have type 2. It usually develops in adults over the age of 45 years but it is increasingly occurring at a younger age. Currently, there are just over 981,000 Australians living with diagnosed type 2 diabetes,

32,000 of whom are in the age range 21–39 years.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition; its onset is usually abrupt and symptoms are obvious. It is always treated with insulin. Type 1 diabetes is more commonly diagnosed in children and [young adults](#) but 50 per cent of cases are diagnosed in adulthood.

Diabetes Australia Young Leader Lou Vickers-Willis said, "As a young person with [type 2 diabetes](#) who didn't have the 'typical' markers of type 2, it's encouraging to have it recognised that, regardless of the type of diabetes, we face the same kinds of challenges. I hope that that this study helps to build better understanding between people living with diabetes."

More information: "Depression, anxiety and self-care behaviours of young adults with Type 2 diabetes: results from the international Diabetes Management and Impact for Long-term Empowerment and Success (MILES) Study." *Diabetic Medicine*. DOI: 10.1111/dme.12566

Provided by Deakin University

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