

press release

New international study:

The hidden burden of diabetes on family members revealed

New international study shows 64 per cent of family members of people with diabetes are worried or anxious about the risk of low blood sugar

Mississauga, September 10, 2019 – People living with diabetes are not the only ones impacted by the condition. According to a new international study of 4,300 family members of people with diabetes, worrying about low blood sugar, also known as hypoglycemia or 'hypos', can place a significant burden on them too.¹



Nicole Cleaver, Canadian living with diabetes, shares her thoughts about low blood sugar with her family in a film experiment. See video at TalkAboutHypos.ca.

Low blood sugar or “lows” as they are often referred to by people living with diabetes, are a well-known side-effect of diabetes treatment, especially when using insulin, and they can be very unpleasant and dangerous if not managed properly.

To further understand how low blood sugar affects families living with diabetes, Novo Nordisk conducted a series of filmed experiments. In the experiments the person with diabetes and his/her family members were asked similar questions about their experiences with, and feelings about, low blood sugar in two separate rooms. After the interviews, they were shown each other's answers. The films are available at www.TalkAboutHypos.ca, along with materials that could help improve conversations about low blood sugar within the family, as well as with doctors.

Hamilton resident Nicole Cleaver and her family participated in the global study. "It's not often that people with diabetes think about the impact that hypoglycemia can have on the entire family," says Nicole. "Understanding the risks low blood sugar can have is important. I have done my best to make sure that my family is aware of my diabetes and that there is nothing for others living with diabetes to be ashamed of. My family is all aware of what needs to be done when I have a low blood sugar reading and they take great care of me."

Until now, there has been very little research into the impact of low blood sugar on the family members of people with diabetes. The results from this new international TALK-HYPO study, published today in *Diabetes Therapy*, show that up to 64 per cent of family members of people with diabetes are worried or anxious about the risk of low blood sugar,¹ highlighting the significance of this burden for the whole family.

"We frequently hear from people living with diabetes and their caregivers that they fear a hypoglycemic event," says Seema Nagpal, vice president of Science & Policy with Diabetes Canada. "It changes how people participate in activities and negatively impacts quality of life. Listening to individuals living with diabetes and their families is an important part of optimizing management."

Dr. Stewart Harris, Professor in Family Medicine/Division of Endocrinology/Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, and lead investigator for the TALK-HYPO study said: "There has been little research undertaken on the wider impact of low blood sugar on the family members of people living with diabetes. But something as simple as having an open and honest conversation can be incredibly beneficial. This study suggests that family members may be an important catalyst for more conversations about low blood sugar both within the family, as well as with healthcare professionals, and that these conversations may help improve the lives of people with diabetes."

The TALK-HYPO study shows the importance of having more conversations about low blood sugar at home with the family, as well as with doctors, as 76 per cent believe that these conversations could lead to improvements in the life of their family member with diabetes.¹ The respondents also feel that conversations can help bring them closer together, and increases their understanding of how they can better help to manage the low blood sugar that their family member with diabetes experiences (85 per cent).¹

Another interesting finding is that worrying about the risk of low blood sugar can also have a negative impact on the social life of the family members. Almost three in four (74 per cent) of the respondents that were helping their relative with diabetes to manage low blood sugar, said that they spend less time on, or completely miss out on, other activities such as hobbies, holidays or being with other friends or family as a result.¹

About the TALK-HYPO study¹

The TALK-HYPO study was funded by Novo Nordisk and aimed to understand the burden of low blood sugar on the family members of people with diabetes, and how conversations about low blood sugar can contribute to diabetes care.

The questionnaire was completed by 4,300 relatives (37 per cent were parents/step-parents and 18 per cent were spouses/partners) of people living with diabetes (type 1 or type 2, taking insulin and/or secretagogues) across nine countries.

TALK-HYPO study methodology:

On behalf of Novo Nordisk, Ipsos interviewed 4,300 participants online. All participants were adult family members of people aged 18 and above with type 1 or type 2 diabetes who have been taking insulin or a secretagogue for at least 12 months. The survey was carried out across nine countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, UK, US and Denmark. Fieldwork took place from April 8 to May 6, 2019.

About diabetes and low blood sugar

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease that occurs when the body cannot properly produce or use insulin, the hormone that moves glucose (sugar) from food being eaten into the body's cells where it can be used for energy.²

About hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia is defined when blood sugar levels are too low and cannot provide the body's organs with the energy they need. Hypoglycemia is most frequent in people with type 1 diabetes, followed by people with type 2 diabetes managed by insulin, and people with type 2 diabetes managed by sulfonylureas. Low blood sugar can cause a range of symptoms including trembling, sweating, anxiety, increased heart rate, difficulty with concentration, and in severe cases it can lead to seizures or a coma.³

About Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a global healthcare company with more than 90 years of innovation and leadership in diabetes care. This heritage has given us experience and capabilities that also enable us to help people defeat obesity, hemophilia, growth disorders and other serious chronic diseases. Headquartered in Denmark, Novo Nordisk employs approximately 41,700 people in 77 countries and markets its products in more than 165 countries. For more information, visit novonordisk.ca, [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#).

Further information

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