

Supplemental Information

Sample Tip Sheet for MD2Me Participants

(Underlined text was modified according to disease.)

MANAGING PAIN, ANXIETY, AND STRESS

Balancing work or school and other activities may be increasingly hard if you are also trying to deal with the stress, anxiety, and pain from IBD. You may feel sick during finals week or you may have a major deadline while experiencing a flare up. Luckily, there are tools to help you manage and decrease the anxiety and stress in your life. We know it is hard, but it is very important for you to stay strong and positive!

STRESSED OUT?

Have you ever noticed that you feel cranky and unable to deal with even small problems or that you find it hard to focus on tasks when something stressful happens? The fear to leave the house in the morning without knowing if one can make it to school or work without having to stop on a busy highway because of an uncontrollable bowel movement, or the fear of experiencing uncontrollable abdominal discomfort during an important exam are sufficient to make anyone have stress and anxiety. Stress has been shown to increase motility and sensation of the colon to a greater degree in some IBD patients compared with healthy individuals without IBD. So stress can lead to a vicious cycle for those with IBD.

So, what are you going to do to reduce your stress or anxiety? Return to the

problem-solving skills that you learned about earlier in this week's FYI (week 3):

- be clear about the sources of your stress;
- identify the problem;
- brainstorm solutions; and
- make a plan.

When the Stress Is Caused by IBD, Work With Your Medical Team

Because you will be tracking your stress, anxiety, and pain levels, you will be able to work with your IBD medical team to come up with a management plan. Your plan may include the following:

Change in Medications

Work directly with your medical team to talk about your medications and any painful side effects. Talk to your doctor about using over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or antinausea medicines. It would be wise to contact your doctor or medical team if you are using these medications on a regular basis (ie, at least 2–3 times/week). It may be time to readjust your usual medications to reduce symptoms or have some testing done.

Stress Reduction and Ways to Relax Your Body and Mind

You may feel that you are too busy to do these things, but making time to do something you enjoy can actually help you destress and relax, including the following:

- Write about anything! Whether it is poetry or keeping a journal.

- Let your feelings out or try to discuss the situation with close friends or family.
- Do something you enjoy! Listen to music or attend an event like a game or concert.
- Focus on the present. Do not dwell on what you could have done; look to what you can do in your future.
- Exercise. Even if it is just going out for a walk. Stretching can also release muscle tension. Just make sure you are drinking enough and keeping hydrated.
- Practice breathing exercises like deep breathing, yoga, or tai chi.

Maintain Healthy Eating

Staying on top of eating the right foods and avoiding the foods that you know irritate your bowels will help your body maintain the balance it needs (there's more about healthy eating in next week's lifestyle tip...so stay tuned).

Other Ways to Help You Reduce Stress

Some people use drinking, other substances, or isolating themselves from others to deal with stress. Even if these ways seem to work for a few hours, they make stress, health, and IBD worse in the long run. In fact, if you are on certain medications, drinking alcohol or using illicit substances can have unfortunate side effects that can worsen your condition. If you have tried these coping strategies, you will find that they do not work for the long term.

Instead, return to problem solving! The resources below can help with the problem-solving process and they can be part of a good solution.

Support Groups

Knowing other people in the same situation can help you feel less alone. You can also learn other people's ways of solving problems and managing stress. By joining a club or creating one you can help others as well as yourself

to really see that you are not alone and that there are others your age going through the same things.

Counseling or Therapy

Sometimes your emotions can be so intense that you feel overwhelmed. Sometimes others around you simply do not understand what you are going through and it just creates more frustration in your life. Talking with a therapist may help you come to grips

with your problems. If you need help with any of these issues, ask your doctor for a referral to a counselor or therapist.

If you are using alcohol or illegal substances and find that you cannot stop, even though you want to, seek help from family, your treatment team, or community resources immediately. Also get help if you find that you are increasingly sad, depressed, or have thoughts of harming yourself.

Diabetes

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Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring is all about keeping track!

Let us face it, we are all busy! There are so many things to do each day that most of our actions and thoughts happen automatically before we even think about them. This may make managing your diabetes on your own really hard and may be why your Mom or Dad has helped you remember your medications, your medical devices, or your symptoms. With a little bit of self-monitoring you too, will be able to manage your diabetes.

Self-monitoring is just a fancy term for keeping track. And it is probably something that you or your Mom or Dad may already be doing - keeping a log of your blood glucose or what you are eating, for example. Keeping track for yourself is the first step in being able to manage your medical care and communicate well with your doctor.

How Can Self-Monitoring Help?

Self-monitoring may sound hard to do or boring, but self-monitoring...

- Helps you recognize symptoms so that you can get treatment before you have a big problem with your diabetes.
- Helps you remember medications and treatments so that your diabetes stays in better control AND so that you can be more self-reliant instead of depending on your Mom or Dad.
- Lets you keep track of your progress so that if treatments are not working well or if side effects are bothering you - you and your doctor can figure out another course of action.
- Helps you set goals for how you manage your diabetes and how you keep your diabetes from ruling your life.
- Helps you identify problems and barriers to taking care of yourself so that you can solve them and overcome them.

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SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURE 3

Sample screenshot of the MD2Me Website for Type 1 Diabetes participants.

IBD

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Health Insurance, Part 2

As you probably know by now, having health insurance is important-it will help off-set the costs of appointments, medications, and hospitalizations and allow you to spend money on the things and activities that you really like. Last week, you learned about different types of health insurance and hopefully you have figured out what kind of coverage you have, whether you have a co-pay (i.e. you have to pay at the time of medical care), and how long your coverage lasts (*if you hadn't a chance to do that yet, take a moment now to figure it out and refer back to week 2 in the library*). This week, you will learn about health insurance options once you are off your parents' insurance plan or at school.

Note: New health legislation will be changing some things with health insurance. Stay up-to-date by following the new health legislation closely.

Where to get health insurance?

Under current health care policies, it is more affordable to get your health insurance through your job or school because you have a pre-existing condition (a word of caution: *even if your company provides health insurance, you may still be required to pay for some of your coverage including premiums, co-pays, deductibles, and medications or treatments.*) than if you have to buy a single policy for yourself. However, with the new health legislation having a pre-existing condition should no longer be a problem with obtaining health insurance. Read on for more information on health insurance.

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SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURE 4

Sample screenshot for MD2Me Website for Inflammatory Bowel Disease participants.