

The Evidence for Peer Support



“The Twitter chat #dsma helped me realize how common it is for diabetes folks to experience mental health crises, in a way that contributed to me seeking therapy and going on an antidepressant, both of which have improved my life immeasurably.

—Jessica Schomberg

Peer support is a valuable tool to support people with diabetes and other chronic conditions as a supplement to your visits with your diabetes care and education specialist. Study after study continues to reinforce its benefits.

What Does Research Show About the Benefits of Peer Support?

1. Online peer support can provide emotional support and answers to common questions, especially for those with limited in-person support.
2. It is associated with improved feelings of self-efficacy and group belonging.
3. People utilizing peer support are less likely to report increased levels of isolation, depressive symptoms and anxiety.
4. Individuals who interact with peer support communities are more likely to have better blood glucose levels, better quality of life and more resources for self-management.
5. Online peer support often offers a wider and more diverse support network than what would be accessible offline through friends and family.

Find these studies and more at DiabetesEducator.org/PeerSupportforHCP

What Are Some Potential Risks of Peer Support?

From healthcare providers and community members alike, there are concerns about potential misinformation or lack of review/moderation in peer support interactions. In an in-depth 2017 study of 140 unique blog posts and 663 associated comments written by parents of a child with type 1 diabetes, misinformation was exceedingly rare and considered not to be harmful. The small amount of medical misinformation in examples of peer support may allay some concerns. Also, mitigation of potential risks includes the self-moderation of peer support online communities and prominently posted statements on most blogs that content should not be considered medical advice.

Learn more about peer support and how you can refer your clients at DiabetesEducator.org/PeerSupportforHCP