

# Living with Diabetes

MILFORD REGIONAL DIABETES EDUCATION PATIENT NEWSLETTER



FALL 2024

## FROM OVERWHELMED TO EMPOWERED

### Turning a Diagnosis into Determination

One year ago, Franklin resident Dale Quinn began experiencing unusual symptoms. She was constantly thirsty, sometimes felt dizzy, noticed occasional blurred vision, and found herself needing to urinate more often. This marked the start of Dale's journey with Type 2 diabetes.

Dale's daughter Lisa, a veterinarian, came for a visit one day and knew immediately that something wasn't right with her mom.

"As a life-long nurse, I should have known better, I didn't feel well and was experiencing all the classic signs. I have psoriatic arthritis, so I thought my symptoms may

have something to do with my condition. Boy, was I wrong," said Dale.

Dale called her Milford Regional primary care physician, Dr. Monica Woodward, and went for an office visit. "Dr. Woodward told me that my blood sugar was over 600 and that I needed to go to the ER. I was in shock."

Dale's husband drove her to the Milford Regional ER, where she would spend the entire day, receiving IV fluids and having blood sugar constantly checked. "I was finally admitted to the hospital. The doctor came in the room and told me I was a diabetic. I was having a hard time believing it. I felt extremely overwhelmed, just another

thing to deal with."

After Dale was discharged, she was referred to Milford Regional Diabetes Education in Mendon. "I had never seen such a fabulous, whole team effort," explained Dale. "They work

together, everyone is on the same page, they are great listeners, and explain everything so that you clearly understand."

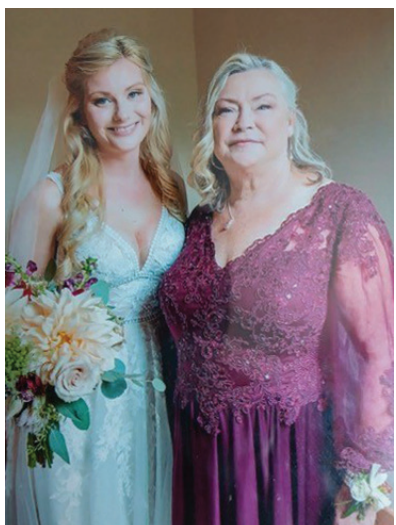
At the diabetes clinic, Dale met with Melinda Gorgone, RN, CDCES, who explained that the pancreas naturally releases insulin. However, when a person gains weight, their pancreas may struggle to produce enough insulin to meet their body's needs, which is a common challenge associated with the disease.

Dale has always been fascinated with nutrition and used to exercise a lot, but due to some recent personal, family stress, she started gaining weight.

"That's where the dietitian comes in, to make sure you understand proteins and carbs and how they work together and the importance of exercise and balancing your diet," said Dale.

"It was a very difficult time in my life. I started stress eating and everything just came together into a perfect storm," said Dale.

Through the diabetes clinic, Dale worked with many people, including a registered dietitian, Christina Morrison,



Dale Quinn, (right) with her daughter Lisa on her wedding day.

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### Knowledge is Power!

Caron Grupposo, RN, CDCES

There are numerous treatments and resources available to help manage diabetes effectively. I encourage all patients to learn as much as they can to make informed choices that best support their individual health needs.

The Internet has a lot of information and it can be overwhelming. I recommend using reputable sites like the American Diabetes Association ([diabetes.org](https://diabetes.org)), Center for Disease Control ([cdc.gov/diabetes/living-with/index.html#cdc\\_living\\_with\\_res-re-sources-and-support](https://cdc.gov/diabetes/living-with/index.html#cdc_living_with_res-re-sources-and-support)) or trusted hospital and academic systems.

Many people find virtual support groups, free mobile apps, and online forums to connect and engage with other patients dealing with diabetes. One caveat of online support groups is that you can't guarantee that the medical advice and information you receive from others is always accurate. Always

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# What You Should Know About GLP1

It seems everyone these days is interested in the medication class GLP1, which includes the better known brand name medications like Ozempic and Trulicity. This once weekly, injectable medication works for diabetes in three ways:

1. Helps your pancreas make more insulin when blood sugar is high
2. Helps your liver from releasing too much sugar
3. Slows down food digestion

A widely recognized benefit of this medication class is weight loss. By slowing food digestion, the medication helps reduce hunger, signaling to the brain that you're full. Additionally, studies suggest these medications can support cardiovascular health.

However, there are some important side effects to watch for, including: pancreatitis or inflammation of the pancreas that causes nausea, vomiting, and stomach pain; and GI issues, such as diarrhea

and constipation. This could lead to critical illness if not treated promptly.

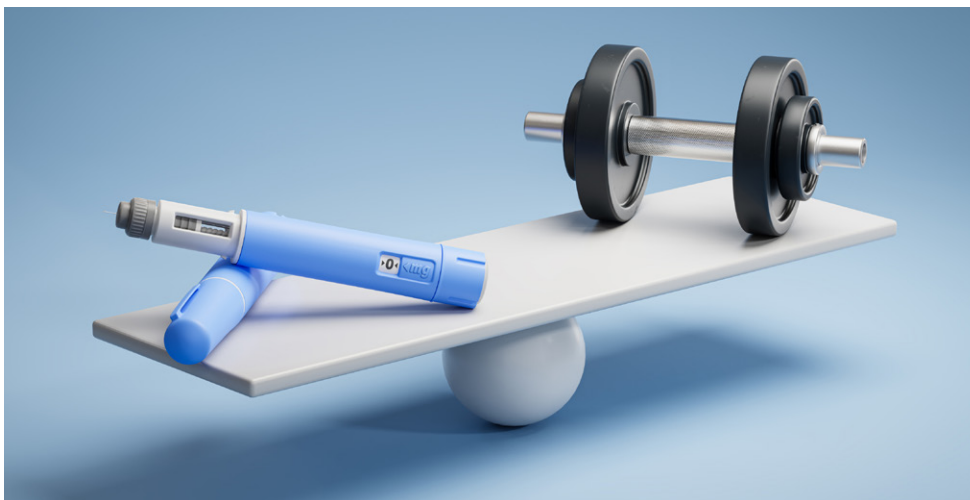
These GLP1 medications are NOT recommended for patients with a history or family history of certain thyroid tumors. We strongly encourage patients to thoroughly research side effects on any new medication and consult your primary care provider.

If you decide to start one of these medications, your provider will typically begin with a low dose, with gradual increases. Since responses vary, what works well for others may not be the best choice for you. We encourage discussing all options with your healthcare provider to make the best decision for your health.

**Here are some tips for success:**

1. Choose bland foods the day after your injection.
2. Opt for smaller, low-fat meals eaten frequently for easier digestion.

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**Determination / Continued From Page One**

and an endocrinologist, Dr. Samir Malkani, and his nurse practitioner Ines Kebir.

"I used to take six units of Humalog, three times a day, but now I don't need it at all." Dale now utilizes a device on her arm that is connected to an app on her phone that keeps track of her blood sugar. "If I'm taking a walk, I follow the device to see if I need a carbohydrate or a little more protein with the carb."

Dale agrees that the diabetes diagnosis has changed her life. "I now always carry my diabetic bag with me wherever I go. I just need to be more aware of where I'm going and make sure I am properly prepared. When I want to eat something, I check my blood sugar first. This makes you much more aware of your nutritional status."

With Thanksgiving and Christmas around the corner, Dale is not worried about restricting herself. "Instead of having an entire slice of dessert, I'll take 2 or 3 bites. It's okay to give myself a little treat, I just cut back on it. When you have diabetes, you have to become more controlled with what you're eating."

When it comes to exercise, Dale knows she needs to do better. "I need to get back to walking a few miles a day, exercise is great for controlling blood sugar."

Perhaps Dale's favorite exercise is taking care of her 11-month-old granddaughter two or three days a week.

"The baby's bedroom is upstairs and I wear a fitbit. I did two and a half miles inside her house the other day! Now that's exercise!"

Dale has some advice for others who are finding out they are diabetic late in

life. "Pay close attention to how you're feeling, don't ignore symptoms when your body is telling you something is off. After your diagnosis, make sure to find support, like the Milford Regional Diabetes Education clinic.

"Growing up in a large family, I was used to taking care of others. As an adult, I became a nurse and took care of patients. Then I got married, had children and did my best to take care of them...but you have to remember to take care of yourself!"

Dale follows up with the Diabetes clinic every three to six months to ensure she is staying on track. According to Melinda Gorgone, Dale is managing her condition and continues to do remarkably well.

## Reflections from a Diabetes Educator

As Norma Ringuette, RN, CDCES, plans to retire in the Spring of 2025, she took a moment to reflect on her career in diabetes education, the evolution of diabetes care, and the meaningful impact her patients have had on her. We extend our best wishes to Norma in this next chapter!

### Q: Can you share a bit about your background and experience at Milford Regional?

I've been with Milford Regional for 30 years. I started on the inpatient units and then spent 20 years working as a staff nurse in the Emergency Room (ER). About 12 years ago, I transitioned into diabetes education. The change came naturally after seeing many patients in the ER with issues related to blood sugar. Additionally, around the same time, my son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 19, which was a pivotal moment for me.

### Q: How did your son's diagnosis influence your career?

His diagnosis came on abruptly – he lost a lot of weight and became very ill quickly. We brought him into the Milford ER, where he was diagnosed with diabetes and admitted. I immediately reached out to Jo Fleming, a highly respected nurse and patient educator, who was instrumental in helping me navigate that difficult time. She not only helped me create a care plan for my son but also inspired me to pursue diabetes education. She became my mentor, guiding me on the requirements for diabetes certification. After accumulating 1,000 hours of teaching, I passed the certification exam and eventually left the ER to become a diabetes educator in the outpatient setting.

### Q: What has been one of the most rewarding moments in your career?

The most rewarding moments are when patients share how much we've helped them. Knowing we've made a meaningful impact on someone's life is incredibly fulfilling. It's a privilege to be trusted with some of the most significant aspects of our patients' lives.

### Q: How have you seen diabetes care evolve over the years?

The biggest change has been the advancement in technology, especially with insulin pumps that are now automated. Continuous glucose monitors have also become more accessible, with insurance companies now more willing to cover them. Moving over to Milford Regional Physician Group (MRPG) has been a great step forward as well, providing opportunities to collaborate with our outstanding endocrinologists in Mendon.

### Q: How do you support patients beyond their medical needs?

Empathy is key. Many of our patients face food insecurities and limited incomes, so I always try to connect them with community resources like food banks. It's important to recognize how fortunate we are to have food on the table, and I do my best to offer assistance to those who struggle with these basic needs.

### Q: What keeps you motivated and passionate about your work?

Hearing patient success stories is what keeps me going. Knowing that we've made a difference in someone's life provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment. I often share my son's story with patients, which helps them relate to me on a personal level and gives them hope with their own journey. I'm also fortunate to work with wonderful colleagues. We have a fantastic team of five nurses, a dietitian, and support staff. We all work well together and support one another.

### Q: What are your plans for retirement?

A: I'm an active person, so I plan to stay busy. My husband and I enjoy walking and hiking, and we love boating in the summer. We have three children and five grandchildren, with another grandchild on the way in Minnesota. My son and his family live in Florida, so I'm hoping to travel more and spend time with them.

**ABOUT US** Milford Regional Diabetes Education is certified by the American Diabetes Association. Our highly experienced team of registered dietitians and diabetes educators are all Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialists.

We provide patients with:

- Collaboration with your primary care physician or endocrinologist
- One-on-one learning, i.e. blood sugar testing, using your meter, proper exercise, medicine, preventing complications, and newer diabetes technology
- Nutrition counseling, i.e. designing a meal plan, diet changes, cholesterol and blood pressure, carbohydrate counting, and understanding food labels



Norma Ringuette, RN, CDCES

**Concerned that you may be at risk for pre-diabetes? Visit [milfordregionalphysicians.org/downloads/pre-diabetes-screening](https://milfordregionalphysicians.org/downloads/pre-diabetes-screening) to take a free screening. Call 508-381-3092 to schedule an appointment with Diabetes Education and start gaining control over your disease.**



check with your doctor if you're unsure about the advice someone else is giving you.

Another option is online forums, a dedicated place to ask questions, share news, post personal stories, and much more. Discussions are often organized by categories, such as food and diet, exercise tips, diabetes news and research, mental health, and more. Here are a few examples of diabetes forums to check out:

- [Diabetes Daily Forum](#)
- [Diabetes Sisters](#)
- [TuDiabetes](#)
- [Smart Patients](#)

Beware of people selling products online that "cure" diabetes. Lots of mobile apps are available and can be helpful to track blood sugar, foods and activity. Coaching apps can also be beneficial and provide support. Having accurate

and relevant data can help you and your providers manage your care.

Milford Regional Diabetes Education is a great resource to learn about newer options to care for your diabetes. Most insurance (including Medicare and Medicaid) have some coverage for yearly diabetes education in group or individual sessions. Consult your health plan to make sure you are taking advantage of all services available. Seek out free programs that may be offered in your area.

Whether it's for diet and exercise tips or compassion and friendship, interacting with people who understand what you're experiencing can be a powerful resource for improving your quality of life and managing your condition.

**Contact us at 508-381-3092 or visit [milfordregionalphysicians.org](http://milfordregionalphysicians.org) to find information about diabetes education at Milford Regional Physician Group.**

3. Contact your provider if you experience any side effects, particularly vomiting or stomach pain.
4. Follow-up with your prescriber regularly for dose adjustments.
5. Stay active and maintain a balanced diet.
6. Set a reminder to help remember your weekly dose.

It is true that GLP1 medications offer promising benefits for managing diabetes and weight loss. However, it's essential to be aware of possible side effects and ensure close monitoring, especially at the beginning. Always prioritize open communication with your health-care provider to tailor the approach best suited for you. By following recommended practices and consulting regularly with your provider, you can maximize the effectiveness of this medication class while minimizing risks.



## November is National Diabetes Awareness Month

On Wednesday, November 20, UMass Memorial Health – Milford Regional Medical Center and Milford Regional Physician Group is sponsoring a free, in-person community lecture. *What's New in Diabetes*, will discuss some of the newer products and

**FREE, IN-PERSON  
DIABETES LECTURE  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20  
at 6PM**

trends to help individuals with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes. Topics include newer medications, food trends, exercise options and newer monitoring devices that may help you meet your goals and make life easier. The discussion will be led by Milford

Regional Diabetes Education's Amber Redden, RN, CDCES and Caron Grupposo, RN, CDCES, who specialize in diabetes care.

The lecture is at 6PM and pre-registration is required. Visit [milfordregional.org](http://milfordregional.org) and view "Classes and Events" on the homepage and then select "Lectures."

For questions, call 508-422-2827 or email [msanford@milreg.org](mailto:msanford@milreg.org). An email will be sent to registrants 48 hours prior to the event with information on the lecture location and parking.

**Living with Diabetes**  
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### Milford Regional Diabetes Education

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Do you have a topic that you would like to see covered in this newsletter? Please email your idea to: [cgrupposo@milreg.org](mailto:cgrupposo@milreg.org)