

Living with Diabetes

MILFORD REGIONAL DIABETES EDUCATION PATIENT NEWSLETTER



FALL 2023

What is Insulin Resistance?

Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes insulin resistance. This means your body makes enough insulin but your



cells are not sensitive to it. If you ignore insulin resistance, your pancreas can start to burn out or make less insulin over time. We need insulin to attach to your cell and allow sugar in the cell to make energy. Weight loss helps since you

have less cells that would need insulin. Less fat in the body increases the likelihood of your cell getting the insulin and processing your sugar. Weight loss does not cure Type 2 diabetes but can help with pushing sugars into the normal range. Talk to your health care provider about finding a healthy weight for you and the right tools to reach your goals.

If you need to lose weight, some tools to discuss may include:

1. Eating a low fat, low carbohydrate meal plan
2. Working with a dietitian if you are overwhelmed by healthy meal planning
3. Avoiding processed foods and excessive snacking
4. Exercising
5. Surgical interventions such as bariatric surgery
6. Taking diabetes medication can sometimes lower appetite and slow digestion

ACCEPTANCE, LIFESTYLE CHANGES, GOAL SETTING, EDUCATION AND POSITIVITY:

One Patient's Keys to Success for Living with Diabetes

In November 2021, Franklin native Kyle Lundgren experienced a life changing event. A recent Bentley University grad and two-sport athlete, Kyle was a typical 25-year-old living in the city and enjoying life. He was also excited to embark on a new career path. But he would soon be faced with a new and daunting life challenge – Type 1 Diabetes.

Q: When were you first diagnosed with diabetes and how did you feel when you found out?

On Wednesday November 24, 2021, I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. And yes, I am fully aware of the irony of the timing of my diagnosis - it was the day before Thanksgiving - the most infamous eating holiday in the world! Initially, I was horrified and scared.

Q: Did you have any symptoms?

For the months and weeks leading up to that date, I had noticed some new feelings and symptoms. I had dropped nearly 35lbs, was constantly thirsty, my sleep schedule was abysmal, and I experienced frequent urination in the middle of the day and throughout the night.

All throughout my childhood and into my young adulthood, I never had any significant medical issues. Besides the typical broken bones and seasonal colds, I only ever saw my doctor when it came time for my annual check-up. Whether it was pride or just plain ignorance, I never thought much of my symptoms and didn't have any inclination to visit a doctor.

Q: What made you change your mind about seeking medical attention?

Thankfully, my sister is one of my best friends in the world and is also a nurse. Once I arrived to my parents' house the day before Thanksgiving, my mother instantly knew something was wrong. My mother and sister urged me to go see my doctor.

That day also happened to be my first day working at my new job with Salesforce. With starting a new job, my family urging me to get a blood test, and an upcoming holiday, you could say tensions were high. That night, I received a call from my doctor saying that my blood test had revealed that I was a Type 1 diabetic, with my A1C at 13.6. With no prior family medical history and no real knowledge of what "diabetes" even truly was, my world was spinning.



Type 1 Diabetes patient Kyle Lundgren going for a trail run in Lake Tahoe, CA in May of 2023.

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Q: How has the diagnosis changed your life? What types of challenges have you had to overcome?

The call with my doctor that night truthfully changed my life. At 25 years old, you never think that you are going to get a call saying that you will be living with a lifelong illness. The truth is there was nothing I could have done differently to avoid this diagnosis. I have always eaten very well, sports and overall fitness were always cornerstones of my life, and all of my external factors such as my family and my career have always been a stable source of positivity for me. To come to terms with that was by far the hardest part of the diagnosis.

I have since approached every day with a positive attitude. I am appreciative that my diagnosis of T1D was not something far worse. In addition, it has made me look at my diet and approach to fitness more seriously. I am beyond grateful for all of my family and friends in supporting my lifestyle challenges and simplifying things as much as possible. I am hopeful in the investments and advancements made as it relates to diabetes technology and medicine.

Q: What are the keys to your success for living with diabetes?

I think the largest piece of successfully managing my diabetes is acceptance. In the first few months, everything was a new experience. How much insulin do I take? What time should I take it? Does beer have carbs? Can I only eat salad now? What if I wanted to go for a run? You're telling me I need to keep a Ziploc bag of Skittles in every backpack I own?

Accepting the fact that T1D will forever be a part of me has reshaped my approach to a lot of things, but above all else it is important to know that nobody is perfect.

I explain living with T1D like looking at the math equation Matt Damon wrote on the chalkboard in *Good Will Hunting*. There is an unlimited amount of variables that make up the equation of T1D's impact on your blood sugars, including: food, water, timing, insulin levels, stress, activities, etc. Once you control the variables that you can control and keep yourself to a routine that is manageable, your mental and physical health will reap the benefits. The T1D formula is an impossible one to solve, and if I were able to solve it, I am sure my wallet would be a lot larger. The most important part of the equation is focusing on controlling the variables you can control.

Personally, my approach to T1D has focused a lot more on managing my blood sugars through my diet, fitness, and water intake. Since my diagnosis two years ago, I have not needed to use an insulin pump. I do my best to limit my intake of carbs, run or workout 4-6 days a week, and am sure to be overly hydrated every single day. From there, I have managed to maintain and sustain my A1C into a range that me and my doctors feel completely comfortable with.

Q: How important is the patient education piece?

The patient education portion of my diagnosis was pivotal. I vividly remember my first meeting with my Diabetes Education team, and having a laundry list of questions as simple as "What is Type 1 Diabetes?" As overwhelming as the diagnosis is, I always left my appointment with a clear goal for myself to accomplish for that day, week, and month.

From day one, my diabetes education team, including primary care physician Eric Kohler, MD and endocrinologist Samir Kailani, MD, has played a crucial role in helping me to manage T1D. I still reach out with any questions as it relates to diet, articles I see, things I hear, medication changes, or approaches to fitness. For me, the relationships I have built with education specialist Norma Ringuette and dietitian Christina Morrison, have proven to be extremely beneficial. Instead of being treated as a patient with a lifelong illness, we established a friendship and partnership that has truly helped to guide me through this challenging diagnosis.

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Don't Hibernate this Winter

Winter is right around the corner. Everyone needs a winter plan. It's too easy to stay inside when the days get shorter and the weather is cold. However, it is important to find ways to be active every day. The American Diabetes Association recommends at least 150 minutes per week. Exercise not only helps bring blood sugars down, but also helps mental health and overall wellbeing. It also helps to burn off some holiday calories.

Some ideas to be on track:

1. Bundle up and spend some time outside (walking, skiing, snowshoeing or skating)
2. Join a gym
3. Exercise with a friend to help motivate you
4. Look into home exercise equipment like a peddler or treadmill
5. Go online for remote classes or pre-recorded options
6. Head to a mall or bigger store for some indoor walking
7. Join a bowling league or indoor activity

Q: What is your advice for other people who are living with diabetes?

My biggest advice to anybody living with diabetes is to never let it dictate your life. While you may need to put in place some changes in your lifestyle, never let it tell you what you can or can't do. Find a routine that works for you and your blood sugars, and make it as repeatable, yet as exciting as possible.

Like a majority of people, my job is my life Monday through Friday. I have added variety in my approach to fitness so I am doing different types of exercise before the work day begins, to set myself up for success.

For example, with football season underway, I always try and go for a jog or to the gym early Sunday morning so my blood sugars are in a better range as I prepare to sit down for 7-hours of commercial free football every week. Find little pockets of time every day to focus on your health, manage your diabetes, and set your day up for success.

Also, try and set goals. For me, running the Boston Marathon has always been a goal of mine. Between COVID in 2020 and my diagnosis in 2021, I had to press pause. Rather than writing off that goal as unachievable, I found a way that works for me when it comes to training and distance running. On October 8th, 2023, I completed my first marathon, and recently found out that I have been given the opportunity to run the 2024 Boston Marathon on behalf of the Joslin Diabetes Center here in Boston!

Long story short, do not ignore your diagnosis. Embrace the lifestyle changes that you need to make, but do not let it dictate what you can and cannot accomplish. You are not alone, and there are hundreds of thousands of people out there who have felt the exact same way. In the words of Ted Lasso...be a goldfish!

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Milford Regional Diabetes Education, please call 508-381-3092.



Healthy Holiday Makeover Tips

The holidays are coming soon, which can be challenging with diabetes. While spending time with family and friends, we tend to have more opportunities to eat. Know what dishes are your triggers and see if it is possible to tweak them into healthier options. If not, try fitting a small amount of your favorites into your meal plan by watching the portion size.

Perhaps your favorite foods can be made with less sugar or lower fat. In place of butter, cook with more clear broths and less creamy items. Reduce the sugar in a recipe by a quarter, replace with Stevia, or try Splenda for baking which cuts your sugar in half. Splenda for baking is half Splenda and half regular sugar, which lets your baked good rise and brown. Replace creams with lower fat milk or non-dairy milks like Almond milk. Fruit garnishes can make a dessert sweet. Crustless or single crust only desserts reduces carbohydrate intake. Angel food cake or sugar free pudding are tasty low calorie options that can be a base for a dessert.

A quick walk after a meal will help your blood sugar. If you are attending a gathering, consider bringing the healthy option for everyone. If you get off track, just try to get back on track the next day.

Have a festive holiday season and enjoy some of the suggestions below.

Pumpkin Pie (or other favorite pie):

Use a pumpkin yogurt or sugar free pudding as your filling and add to a single serve pie tart. You can even mix pumpkin butter into a plain yogurt. Top with pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon and whipped topping.

Apple Cider: Use low sugar or light apple juice and simmer on the stove with mulling spices. Your kitchen will smell great and it can be made ahead of time and can enjoy it hot or cold.

Stuffing: There are a few brands that offer whole wheat varieties. You can even add more carrots, celery or your favorite vegetables for flavor. Make ahead of time and use an ice cream scoop to "bake" single servings in muffin tins. These are great if you like a crunchy top.



Ten Tips for Saving Money with Diabetes

Diabetes costs can really add up. You can save money on medicine, supplies, and treatment and still get the care you need. According to the CDC, a person with diabetes pays more than twice as much a year for health care as a person without diabetes. The good news is that you can save on many of those costs so that managing diabetes doesn't take such a big bite out of your budget.

1. Make a grocery list and stick to it.
2. Shop for foods that are in season and included in weekly circular.
3. Try store brand/generic items.
4. Look for discounts on auto ship items or bulk items.
5. Find out if you are eligible for Snap Benefits, which can be used for grocery items at stores and farmer's markets.
6. Use in-store pick-up or delivery. There will be less opportunity for impulse items.
7. Search for coupons in the newspaper, online or download free grocery store apps.
8. Try frozen (plain) over fresh for foods especially if the food is out of season.
9. Look for discount racks at grocery stores, especially for foods you will use soon.

ALSO...check your local food pantry or community free/discounted meals, which are often hosted at churches or senior centers.

Put Your Best Foot Forward

People with diabetes have a higher risk of nerve damage and circulation issues. Higher blood sugars flow through your body and over time, can do damage to the vessels that connect to your feet. If this happens, you may end up with wounds that won't heal, infections, reduced feeling or pain. We recommend looking at your feet daily. If unable to reach your feet, ask a friend or family member to check for you. You can also use a small mirror on the floor to view the underside of your feet.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

1. Any open areas
2. Redness
3. Swelling
4. Ingrown toenails

Early detection & good blood sugars are the best tools for keeping your feet healthy!

ALWAYS...

1. Wear good fitting shoes and avoid bare feet
2. Keep feet dry and avoid soaking feet for extended periods
3. Check temperature of water or hot surfaces to avoid burns to feet
4. Avoid lotion between toes
5. Stop smoking! This will help circulation.
6. See a podiatrist or health care provider for any issues or concerns with your feet

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