

Type 2 Diabetes...My Story

Brian, 46 was diagnosed with diabetes, after developing a number of symptoms, including excessive thirst and fatigue. Here he tells how he was diagnosed, what treatment he needed and how making lifestyle changes has improved his health.

My health complaint

I found out I was a type 2 diabetic two years ago. My doctor thinks I had the condition for longer than this though as I had no real symptoms to start with, they came on quite gradually. I did get thirsty quite a lot but put it down to working hard and just being dehydrated. I was also feeling really tired but put this down to a busy work and family life. It was during a routine check-up where I started to describe some of the symptoms, because of these and the fact I was overweight my GP suggested I get a test just to be on the safe side.

The tests showed my blood sugar level too high, which meant I was diabetic.

Treatment

As soon as I heard the words 'diabetes' I thought I'd be on insulin injections for life, but the doctor said that was not necessarily the case with type 2 diabetes.

I was told I would have to change my lifestyle to help control my blood sugar. That was pretty daunting and I didn't really take it seriously at first. It was only once I then saw the diabetes nurse and she gave me some information on what damage high blood sugar could do that I realised I had to do something about it. I didn't want to have any problems with my heart or vision let alone losing feeling in my feet; the thought of not being able to carry on with my job is probably what scared me into action.

What I did

A big part of treating my condition was down to me and the way I lived my life. Following the advice given by my GP and diabetic nurse I slowly made the following changes one at a time:

- Eating better - Fruit and vegetables were rarely on my plate before I had diabetes, I had peas a couple of times a week and that was about it. Now I try and have vegetables with every meal and I do find they help fill me up. I'd often skip breakfast or have a greasy fry up when I got to work but I've learnt this is a big no no and so tend to start the day with porridge or shredded wheat and I find I have far more energy throughout the morning. With diabetes as well I have to make sure my sugar levels don't fall too low so I try to snack between meals on nuts and some fresh fruit.
- Exercise. The doctor told me that physical activity can help lower blood sugar levels. I don't do as much as I should but I do more than I used to! I go for a 20 minute walk



after dinner in the summer and I use the gym at work a few times a week. Before this I thought the gym was just for body builders, but now I know there are a lot of middle aged blokes like me there just trying to get a bit fitter.

Both of these changes have helped manage my blood sugar levels but have also helped me to lose a bit of weight. I've changed some of my habits but I do still like a curry and a pint with my mates every now and again but I try to order tandoori chicken rather than creamy sauces. I've lost two stone over two years and I actually joined an online slimming club a few months ago. It's been slow but steady and I'm definitely feeling the benefits.

Where I am now

I make sure I go for my check-ups: I have my blood sugar levels and blood pressure checked every 2-6 months. I also have my eyes checked every year for sign of damage but so far so good.

I have been warned that diabetes inevitably gets worse. So far keeping my weight down and exercising alone has got my blood sugar levels under control. At some point I may need medication to keep it under control but I try not to think about that and am just doing my bit to stay as healthy as I can.



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