

A Patient's story - Debra

Debra's inspirational journey from when she was diagnosed with Diabetes Type 2.

In her own words, Debra describes how she has turned her life around after diagnosis in December 2017.

I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes on 8th December 2017 after going to the Doctor with a problem of sudden onset heartburn which had been constant for over 4 weeks. I also had an urgency to go to the toilet like never before. I was very worried. I had bloods taken and the results were shocking. My Hba1c (the test which gives you the average blood glucose level for the last 2 to 3 months) was 62mmol or 7.8% and well into the realms of diabetes. I now had a label. Type 2 diabetic. I had seen my mum suffer with complications of T2D, she was insulin dependent, she had wounds that wouldn't heal, she became registered blind, she had a stroke, all of which I put down to the diabetes. I cried, a lot. I don't want this disease, it's complications, the idea of a shortened life expectancy or to be a burden to my family though ill health. I felt it was all my fault. What had I done to myself? And what could I now do to help myself. A very close family member had reversed theirs by having a gastric bypass, but that wasn't an option for me, I wasn't over weight enough. So I turned to Dr Google.

I had heard you could reverse diabetes with diet and exercise so I refused the Metformin the

Diabetic Nurse asked me to take and asked her for a 3 month period to see if I could help myself. I placed the nurse's statement 'it will be progressive' to the back of my mind and put 'reversing diabetes' into the Google search engine. The first site it took me to was Diabetes.co.uk. I read lots of success stories on there which gave me great hope. These people had all been in the same boat as me but turned things around by going on a low carbohydrate high (healthy) fat diet (LCHF).

I asked the diabetic nurse if I needed to do finger prick tests during the day to check my glucose levels but they don't give them out unless you are taking medication that can cause hypos and hypes. Of course I wasn't taking medication. But my daughter had gestational diabetes and had a meter so I decided to use this. I had to self fund the strips but to me it was a brilliant investment. When you test you instantly know which foods work for you and which don't. Everyone diabetic reacts to food differently, it isn't one size fits all. I was instantly able to see what spiked my blood sugar and take it out of the equation,



Further information on type 1 & type 2 diabetes can be found on the following web-sites:

www.diabetes.co.uk

www.diabetes.org.uk

www.jdrf.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/diabetes

adjust portion sizes or find a lower carb option. I logged all my readings in an app called Mysugr, it gives you an estimated Hba1c so I knew I was on track for a good reduction at my next lab test, and I was right. My Hba1c went from 62 to 41 in 6 months. My weight went from 14 stone 7lbs in November 2017 to 10 stone 10lbs in the same time, which was an added bonus. A total of 3 stone and 11 lbs or 53lbs or 24 kg. And have a healthy BMI of 22. And the icing on the low carb cake was a whole new wardrobe going from a size 18/20 to a size 12. I enjoyed the food and I didn't feel hungry either.

So I wanted to spread the word and wrote an article for my local paper. I answered many questions from readers but when the questions fizzled out I felt flat. So I thought to myself 'what if I try and get lots of us together for an article, all who have 'reversed' their condition, put it into remission or have great control and all who have managed to lose weight at the same time'. To show that it doesn't have to be progressive, if we change our way of eating, amend the dietary advice given.. So I asked on the forum if anyone would like to join me on my plight. I had an excellent result. And we put together an event in Birmingham

on 1st September. A group of 20 of us met up. Diabetes.co.uk added their support, booked a venue, provided the food and their own PR team. They took lots of photos and videos at this event aiming to use them to get our messages out. The message is 'This does not have to be the progressive disease it is made out to be, we can take back control of our blood sugars and lose weight at the same time'. Since then myself and several other forum members have been in newspapers, magazines and on the radio. Hopefully there will be a lot more in the pipeline. We have contacted This Morning and hope to get a positive response about several members travelling to London to sit on the sofa with Holly and Phil.

I have also joined the PPG (patient participation group) at the surgery to see if I can help at all. There is a meeting for diabetics run by diabetics held at the local Tesco on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. I have joined here too. They are a small group but looking to recruit more members. I attended my first meeting this October and found it very beneficial. Everyone was very welcoming.

Looking back over the past 10 months I can see how much my life has changed, and for the better. I would go as far as saying my diagnosis has been a blessing in disguise. With the help of my meter I am controlling my blood glucose levels, so much so that my latest hba1c test is showing me at 33mmol/mol (5.2%) and well into the non diabetic range and I am maintaining my weight. Of course the LCHF way of eating doesn't suit everyone and if you have other health issues I would check with your GP before embarking on it. I was initially worried as I have listened to the 'fats are totally bad for us' lessons since 1977. I have learned a lot about the body and how it uses fat over the 10 months and realise that there are some essential fats out there that can help to keep us healthy. Following my research over the past 10 months I feel the current guidelines for type 2 and even type 1 diabetics is out of date and needs to be reviewed as soon as possible. I can see in some areas changes are coming in but it is very slow. I think more importance should be placed on a pre-diabetes diagnosis also. Ultimately prevention is far better than cure. Give diabetes an inch it takes a foot.

