



Healthy for Life Newsletter
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Diabetes Increases among the Young

Matt was 23 years old when he came into my office for a routine physical for the Peace Corp. I had delivered Matt and had watched him grow up. In fact, he had grown up a lot during that time. He was 6 feet 3 inches tall and weighed approximately 310 pounds. When I asked him how he was doing, he quickly informed me that he was not feeling all that well. He was tired and fatigued and needed to drink a lot of water and was going to bathroom frequently. I decided to just check a random blood sugar on him and I found that it was 610 mg/dl (36.6 mmol/L — Normal = 65 – 99 mg/dl). Obviously, I immediately admitted him to the hospital and began trying to get his blood sugars down with intravenous insulin. Matt was very resistant to treatment and I needed to consult our local endocrinologist (diabetes specialist). He had to give Matt 90 units of insulin twice daily to get his blood sugars under control. He told me that this was the most insulin he had ever given anyone in his medical career. However, as we are now realizing, Matt's story is not that unusual and more and more young adults are becoming diabetic every day.

Diabetes mellitus has increased by over 500% during the past 3 decades. Now there is growing evidence that diabetes, especially type 2 or what was previously known as adult-onset diabetes, is growing at unprecedented rates among our young. In fact, in 2010, there were approximately 465,000 new cases of diabetes among individuals who were between 20 and 44 years of age. Nearly 4% of the population in this age group already has diabetes and many of those cases are type 2.

Years of Life Lost

Physicians have always known that their diabetic patients begin to age much faster than they should when they become diabetic. Now we are beginning to realize that when our patients even become pre-diabetic, that they begin to age about a third faster than they should. So for every third birthday, they can simply add another year of life. The longer you live with pre-diabetes and diabetes the shorter your life expectancy. Diabetes will shorten the lives of men diagnosed at age 30 by an average of 14.5 years. If a man is diagnosed as having diabetes at age 20, he can expect to die 17 years earlier than a man who does not develop diabetes. A woman who is diagnosed at age 30 as having diabetes will shorten her life expectancy by 16.5 years and if diagnosed at age 20, she can expect to die an average of 18 years early. Just think about that for a minute. If your son or daughter has just become diabetic, they

have given up nearly 25% of their life expectancy. However, the tragedy does not end there.

Today diabetes is the main cause of adult blindness in the Western world. It is also the leading cause of kidney failure and the need for lifetime dialysis or kidney transplant. It is also the most common cause of non-traumatic amputations and nerve damage. It is also well known among physicians that nearly 80% of their diabetic patients will die prematurely because of a cardiovascular event like a heart attack or stroke.

Dr. Choi, chief of vascular surgery and the Limb Salvage Center at Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia, has the devastating results of early diabetes among our youth today. He states that his team was required to perform 40 or 50 limb amputations this past year. He told USA Today that easily 10 of those amputations occurred in adults under the age of 45. This is a very troubling trend. However, the younger individuals develop pre-diabetes and diabetes the longer they must deal with the eventual consequences and complications of the disease.

Beyond the Spread of Obesity

It has been felt that the significant increase in diabetes we are witnessing was the result of the fact that more and more people are becoming overweight. However, researchers are now beginning to realize that central obesity is just one of the hallmark signs of underlying insulin resistance. In other words, when you become less sensitive to your own insulin, you literally tip over into an abnormal metabolic state. Your body compensates for this situation by making more and more insulin. As blood insulin levels begin to rise, your blood pressure goes up, your triglyceride levels

(the other fat in the blood) goes up, your good or HDL cholesterol goes down as your bad or LDL cholesterol rises, and then you begin putting on an unusual amount of weight around your middle (central obesity). This was previously known as Syndrome X or the metabolic syndrome; however it is now called pre-diabetes. Once you develop pre-diabetes, your arteries begin aging much faster than they should because of all the changes mentioned above. You may remain pre-diabetic for 10 to 15 years before you actually develop diabetes. Why is this important? Well, it is because if you become diabetic at age 30, you most likely were diabetic at age 18. This is why the day a physician diagnoses someone with diabetes in their office 60% of them already has major cardiovascular disease. It is too late for many of them because so much damage to their arteries.

Central obesity is just one of the signs of underlying insulin resistance. It is not the cause of insulin resistance or diabetes. This is because, when you tip over into this abnormal metabolic state, a calorie is no longer a calorie. The muscle is not able to utilize the calories normally so many of the calories that were previously used for energy are now being diverted to the fat cells of the abdomen. The high insulin levels (insulin is your storage hormone) now convert this glucose or calories to fat and then block the release of that fat. This is why a pre-diabetic or diabetic holds on to fat like a sponge holds on to water. They cannot effectively lose weight unless they are able to reverse their underlying insulin resistance.

Intensive Lifestyle Changes

The American Association and College of Endocrinology had a consensus meeting and released their findings in the fall of 2008. They determined that physicians needed to

be treating pre-diabetes as aggressively as they did diabetes. When they reviewed the worldwide medical literature, they determined that the best way to treat pre-diabetes was not by the use of drugs, but instead, by intensive lifestyle changes. This is the heart of the *Healthy for Life Program* located at www.releasingfat.com. Here you will learn a triad of healthy lifestyles that all improve insulin sensitivity. This is a healthy diet that combines those good, low-glycemic carbohydrates, good fats, and good proteins, along with a modest exercise program and nutritional supplementation.

I shared this approach with Matt when he was finally able to leave the hospital. He learned to eat a healthy diet and change his eating patterns with the help of healthy meal and snack replacements. He began to consume high-quality, complete and balanced nutritional supplements, and firmly established a modest aerobic exercise program. Obviously, Matt was motivated and continued to be followed by the endocrinologist. However, after about 4 months Matt came into my office to inform me how well he was doing. In fact, he stated, "Dr. Strand, my blood sugars are normal." "Well," I said, "that is great Matt." I thought he had just finally gotten his blood sugars back under control with the use of insulin. However, he said, "You don't understand Dr. Strand, my blood sugars are normal and I am not taking any insulin." I was shocked and honestly did not believe him. So I had him come in to repeat a fasting blood sugar test in my office the next morning. It was 86 mg/dl (5.16 mmol/L). I then did a glucose tolerance test and a Hemoglobin A1C (the amount of sugar in a red blood cell) and these too were perfectly normal. Matt was no longer diabetic. This was not only amazing, it was astonishing!

Remember, Matt originally came to see me because he wanted to go into the Peace Corp. Well, he was obviously denied because he was an insulin dependent diabetic. However, now he was not even diabetic. I wrote to the Peace Corp trying to explain Matt's situation. I told them that even though Matt was once an insulin dependent diabetic that now he was no longer diabetic. Well, they did not believe me. In fact, Matt was referred to another physician for a second opinion. To their amazement, this physician also documented the fact that Matt was not diabetic. To make a long story short, Matt was able to go to the Peace Corp and for the next two years enjoyed his duties in Africa serving the Peace Corp. When Matt returned from Africa, he stopped by my office again just to inform me that he still was not diabetic and that he had lost 120 pounds and now weighed 190 pounds. He told me that the amazing thing was that he had not tried to lose the weight and that he never went hungry. He simply began releasing fat when he began controlling and reversing his diabetes.

Matt has continued to do well and will not face the deadly consequences that young adults must face who become diabetic. In fact, I have now witnessed over 50 diabetic patients who have totally reversed their diabetes by following my health concepts that I share in the *Healthy for Life Program*. I believe that diabetes is a choice. When you firmly establish a healthy diet, modest exercise, and consume high-quality, complete and balanced nutritional supplements—you improve your sensitivity to your own insulin. This then gives you the absolute best chance of avoiding becoming diabetic and even possibly reversing your diabetes (if you already have become diabetic). This is the message that the young people need to hear. Check out my *Healthy for Life Program* located at

www.releasingfat.com and my July/August 2009 Healthy for Life Newsletter—“Diabetes is a Choice.”