

How to Live Diabetes-Free

Millions suffer each year from complications related to the nation's latest epidemic: diabetes. But you can prevent or reverse the long-term effects of this not-so-silent killer. ❌

When New York filmmaker Morgan Spurlock set out to draw a line between the rise of obesity in America and fast-food giant McDonald's, he never dreamed that his 2004 documentary, *Supersize Me*, would be nominated for an Academy Award, earn more than \$20 million and turn the film's title into a watchword for health activists everywhere. It also made him a PR nightmare for the McDonald's corporation. For his film, Spurlock made himself a guinea pig, tracked his progress and documented the results. For one month he ate nothing but McDonald's food for all three daily meals, sampling every item on the Golden Arches' menu. Whenever cashiers asked if he wanted his meal supersized, he accepted.

His experiment represented untold millions of people who get the majority of their daily sustenance from fast food. Spurlock turned himself into a physical representation of these silent masses, consuming an average of 5,000 calories a day. He gained almost 25 pounds, increased his body mass index by 13 percent, raised his cholesterol to 230 and accumulated a dangerous fat level in his liver.

I sometimes wonder if many Americans were paying attention.

Last summer a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that the proportion of obese Americans is at an astounding level: about one-third, or 33.8 percent. This is serious for two reasons: Obesity currently kills an estimated 400,000 Americans a year, but for those whose lives it doesn't claim, it's a key link to a serious, life-threatening disease: diabetes.

Diabetes kills more people than AIDS and breast cancer combined. The World Health Organization estimates that by 2030 the worldwide number of people with diabetes will double, reaching 360 million. In the U.S., Type 2 diabetes is increasing at an alarming rate. Not only do approximately one in 10 Americans age 20 and older have diabetes, the rate of children being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes is growing rapidly. Some 215,000 people under age 20 have Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes (the latter was formerly considered an adult-onset problem).

With our nation facing the biggest health-care crisis in its history, each of us must realize we cannot rely on doctors, clinics or the government to make us healthy. We each must take responsibility for our own health.

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is actually a group of diseases. It includes Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 diabetes and gestational diabetes. Each type is characterized by a high level of blood sugar that is the result of either defective insulin production, defects in the action of insulin or both.

Type 1 diabetes has been called insulin-dependent diabetes, juvenile-onset diabetes or childhood-onset diabetes. It can strike at any age, but usually occurs in children or young adults. In adults it is quite rare.

If you have Type 1 diabetes, you will require insulin injections daily, but there are ways you can properly manage your glucose levels and ward off the long-term complications associated with the disease.

Type 2 diabetes was previously called non-insulin-dependent diabetes or adult-onset diabetes because most people contracted the disease in their adult years. Today our nation's taste for high-sugar, high-fat diets seems to have removed the age barriers.

In adults, up to 95 percent of all diabetes cases are Type 2. And 1.9 million new cases of diabetes in people 20 and older were diagnosed in 2010, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Gestational diabetes is acquired during pregnancy but occurs in only about 2 percent of pregnancies. It usually goes away after giving birth, yet it can increase a woman's risk of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life.

Diabetes comes with numerous complications too. It damages—and may eventually destroy—the kidneys and lead to dialysis. It damages blood vessels and may lead to blindness, impotence, heart attack, stroke and poor circulation in the extremities. It can damage nerves, causing burning pains and numbness in the feet, and lead to foot and leg ulcers, infections, and possibly eventual amputation.

Is this helping you get the picture of the seriousness of this disease and the need to prevent it in your own life?

A caution: Don't take your presence in one of these groups as evidence that you are bound for trouble. Take it as a signal that you need to pay closer attention to diet, exercise and, in particular, losing belly fat.

I imagine this sounds like familiar advice. Yes, it could apply to anyone in our "couch potato" nation, but because obesity and overweight conditions are particularly associated with diabetes, it makes sense that if we want to prevent or reverse the disease's long-term effects we must begin by reducing to a healthy weight.

For this to happen, though, we first need to get to the root of the problem: diet, lifestyle and waistline. Habitual consumption of soft drinks, candy bars, pie or cake, or large helpings of white rice, potatoes and white bread will help you sign on the dotted line for prediabetes and diabetes.

The standard American diet is full of empty carbohydrates, sugars, fats, excessive proteins and calories, and is low in nutrient content. Eating this way literally causes us to lose nutrients such as chromium, which is crucial in regulating glucose levels in our blood. Simply put, people suffering from diabetes have high sugar levels in their blood.

Combined with our poor diet is our lack of physical activity. Too many children no longer play sports or participate in outdoor activities. Instead they are being entranced by video games, smartphones, text messaging, social networking, online media and movies. Pairing this lifestyle with a steady diet of fast foods means that reducing exercise to a flick of the finger equals ever-increasing weight gain.

Also, the excessive stress that most adults and many children labor under increases cortisol levels. As a result, many are developing toxic belly fat, thereby increasing their risk for incurring diabetes. Long-term stress eventually depletes stress hormones as well as neurotransmitters, helping unleash ravenous appetites and addictions to sugar and carbohydrates.

Most Americans are unknowingly sowing seeds for a harvest of obesity, diabetes, and a host of other diseases by their choices of food and lifestyle habits. The onset of Type 1 diabetes is beyond anyone's control. However, I often say that prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes are "choice" diseases—you develop them because of wrong choices.

Feel Better, Live Longer

By now you may be wondering if there is any hope of avoiding diabetes! Be encouraged; the answer is yes. Regardless of which type of diabetes you may have, God can heal your condition.

I have known people who were healed of diabetes by God's miracle-working power. And I have witnessed others whose lives have dramatically improved through healthy lifestyle choices

and natural treatments.

(Realize that only you can choose to eat healthy foods, exercise, lose weight and take supplements. God can't do that for you.)

I hope I've made it clear for you that many cases of diabetes are directly linked to obesity. Determine right now that, with God's help, you will get to your ideal weight and stay there. Weight control is a powerful key to the reversal and the prevention of diabetes. If you already have Type 2 diabetes, weight control is essential.

Another equally important thing you should do is to start looking at your waistline as a key indicator of diabetes management.

Typically if your waist measurement increases, your blood sugar will increase; if your waist measurement decreases, your blood sugar will decrease. By focusing on your waistline and following a doctor's plan and exercise advice to shrink your waist, you will find that your blood sugar will drop as your waist shrinks.

You should measure your waist. The accurate way to do this is take the measurement around your belly button (and love handles if you have them). I've had patients who were shocked by their true waist size when they measured it this way. As reality sinks in, I help them devise the following plan:

First, establish a waist measurement goal. Initially this goal for a man with diabetes or prediabetes is 40 inches or less. For a woman with prediabetes or diabetes the goal is 35 inches or less.

Second, take your height in inches and divide it by two. *Eventually* your waist measurement should be equal to this number or less.

In other words, your waist should measure half of your height, or less. Thus, a 5-foot-10-inch man is 70 inches tall, so his waist around the belly button and love handles should be 35 inches or less.

I said “eventually” in the paragraph above because it will take you some time to get the circumference down. Especially if you are prediabetic or a Type 2 diabetic, decrease your waist to 40 inches or less (for men) or 35 inches or less (for women) before you worry about reducing it to half your height. I can promise you that with every inch lost in your waist, you will be amazed at the corresponding drop in your blood sugar.

Sit down now and formulate your own plans to eat a proper diet, establish better lifestyles, lose weight and reverse the effects of diabetes. The ride may seem all uphill at first, but in time you will be zipping downhill with the breeze blowing in your face.

God’s desire is for you to feel better and to live longer—and He will help you reach that goal! You may be confronting the greatest physical challenge of your life right now. But with faith in God, good nutrition and natural remedies, reversing diabetes can represent a great victory in your life.

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board certified in family practice and anti-aging medicine and an expert on integrative medicine. He is the medical director of Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Fla., and the nonprofit Harvest Time International Medical Center for the underprivileged. Dr. Colbert is also a New York Times best-selling author whose latest book, Reversing Diabetes, releases this month.

Dr. Colbert's top five tips for reversing diabetes ...

✖ **1. Reduce your weight**

Weight

control is a powerful key to the reversal and prevention of diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is directly linked to obesity and diets rich in sugars,

refined carbohydrates and fats. I encourage you to lose weight if you

are seeking to prevent diabetes. Know this, however: If your motive for

losing weight is for any person other than yourself, the odds of failure

are high. You should be doing this for yourself, to make you healthy,

not to please someone else. Making this choice will empower you to lose

weight by developing new and healthy habits.

✖ **2. Shrink your waist**

You

need to consider this as a separate need from weight loss because

reducing your weight will not necessarily take care of this problem. The

larger your waist, the greater your chances of having Type 2 diabetes. A

13-year study of more than 27,000 men published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* discovered that a waist size of 34 to 36 inches doubled diabetes risk, a waist

size of 36 to 38 nearly tripled the risk, a waist size of 38 to 40 was

associated with five times the risk, and a waist size of 40 to 62 was

associated with a whopping 12 times the risk.

3. Maintain a proper diet

I'm not a proponent of dieting. However, with the program I call my Rapid Waist Reduction Diet, I have helped countless patients over the years to lose weight as the first step in managing and even reversing their Type 2 diabetes. It requires a physician's supervision, but once you have adjusted to a healthy eating plan, you can add nutrients and supplements to your diet to help control blood sugar in a systematic, natural way. Multivitamins, vitamin D, chromium, alpha lipoic acid, cinnamon and omega-3 fatty acids help fight Type 2 diabetes.

4. Exercise regularly

An estimated 80 percent of Type 2 diabetes cases are preventable with diet and exercise. I typically have patients with insulin resistance exercise five or six days a week for at least 30 minutes a day. If a person has Type 2 diabetes, I may increase the length of their daily aerobic exercise to 45 to 60 minutes, for five or six days a week. I also place patients with Type 2 diabetes on a strengthening program so they can build more muscle tissue to increase their number of insulin-binding sites. Consult a health professional before you begin a

new exercise program.

5. Reduce your stress

Stress

reduction is crucial in helping control diabetes since a high level of cortisol—the main stress hormone—is associated with increased belly fat, elevated blood sugar and increased insulin levels. Up to 90 percent of doctor visits are prompted by stress-related ailments! Start by relieving personal stress in these everyday ways: De-clutter your house, office or car; reevaluate and prioritize your deadlines; avoid unnecessary competition (finding the perfect parking spot or weaving through traffic); single-task more, multitask less; journal your feelings.