Staying healthy and leading a normal life with type 1 diabetes: a NetWellness column

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
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Question: How can I prevent long-term effects of type 1 diabetes and lead a normal life? Is it possible?

Answer: Yes it is possible!

The most important thing is to refuse to be "diabetic".

Living with diabetes

A person with Type 1 diabetes is a normal person - having diabetes is only one part of life. Diabetes isn’t who you are, it’s something you have, like brown eyes. Yes life is different with diabetes, but it can still be normal. Everyone has a choice — you can be in control of diabetes — or you can let diabetes control you.

Most people with diabetes worry about the problems diabetes can cause with their eyes, kidneys, and heart. These diabetes complications are caused by chronic high blood glucose levels. The secret to lowering the risk of diabetes complications is keeping your glucose levels in a good range — day after day, week after week, year after year.

It’s easy to feel frustrated by the "not normal" things about diabetes — like testing blood glucose, counting carbohydrates, taking insulin,
and worrying about high and low blood glucose levels. Let's face it — having Type 1 diabetes can be hard work! But if we focus on what "health" is instead — like feeling good, being happy, going to work or school, doing everyday activities, playing sports, getting together with friends, traveling, etc. then it is obvious that life can be "normal", even with diabetes.

Advances in diabetes management

We are living in a great time, compared to years ago. People with Type 1 diabetes have many tools available to control blood glucose levels, like carbohydrate counting, new blood glucose meters, Hemoglobin A1c testing, new insulin regimens, insulin pens and insulin pumps, and continuous glucose monitors. Although it takes effort to use these tools, the rewards are great.

Most people are more frustrated with diabetes when glucose levels are out of control. When that happens, take charge! Don't wait for things to magically get better. Collect and study your glucose data, and make changes in your diabetes plan. If you aren't sure what to do, get help from your diabetes educator or diabetes care provider. Don't think "that's just how it is" and give up. Being healthy is worth fighting for!

Every person with diabetes can control their blood glucose levels most of the time - by doing the basics well, like testing blood glucose frequently, counting carbohydrates accurately, taking insulin at the right time, and learning from glucose patterns. Just like brushing your teeth and flossing regularly protects your teeth and your gums, doing diabetes tasks regularly protects your health.

Talk to a healthcare professional

It's important to get help when glucose patterns become confusing. No one can know everything! Even if you know a lot about diabetes, getting ideas from your diabetes educator or your diabetes care provider can be very helpful.

So preventing diabetes complications and leading a normal life with Type 1 diabetes is up to you - just take control of diabetes, and LIVE!

Useful resources

- **Children with Diabetes**, the online community for kids, families and adults with diabetes
- **American Diabetes Association**
ALERT: Swine Flu Kills
Protect your family. Learn about the dangers and natural alternatives.
TheFluFacts.info

1 trick of a flat belly
Cut down 3 lbs in a week by keeping this 1 weird secret
www.MyAllNaturalWeightLoss.com

Top Fat Burners of 2009
Ratings of the top 8 Fat Burners. Which work? Which Don't!
www.newfatburner.com

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