

Preventing, Reversing and Managing Diabetes *Naturally*

by Linda Sechrist

More health practitioners today are recognizing both the mind-body connection, as well as energetic and metaphysical insights into preventing and reversing illnesses. As a result, those facing diabetes and other health challenges are accessing contemporary resources such as Louise L. Hay's explanation of the emotional roots of disease in *You Can Heal Your Life*, and the medical science and natural methods explained by health researcher and author Gary Null, Ph.D., in *No More Diabetes: A Complete Guide to Preventing, Treating, and Overcoming Diabetes*.

Applying a "both" rather than an "either" approach illuminates the importance of recognizing the ways our thoughts, emotions and lifestyle choices can impact chronic illness and long-term health.

Two Perspectives

Hay suggests that this metabolic disorder may be rooted in a feeling of being deprived of life's sweetness and longing for what might have been, accompanied by a great need to control deep sorrow. Such chronic unease can show up as Type 1, or insulin-dependent, diabetes; Type 2, or non-insulin-dependent diabetes; latent autoimmune diabetes in adults (LADA), a slowly progressing variation of Type 1; or gestational diabetes, which occurs during pregnancy.



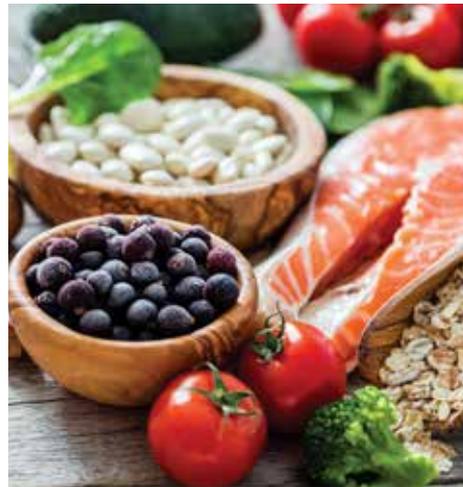
Eavesdropping on our repetitive inner mind chatter and observing its impact on outer experiences can reveal faulty thinking that disrupts the mind-body connection. Hay, a firm believer in the power of affirmations to send a message to the subconscious mind, recommends them to aid healing. For diabetes, she suggests, "This moment is filled with joy. I now choose to experience the sweetness of today."

Null cites medical evidence that explains how the physical causes of diabetes are related to the pancreatic production of the hormone insulin and the body's use of it, together with rollercoaster blood sugar levels determined by food selections, stress, sleeplessness, insufficient rest and lack of exercise. His approach for preventing, reversing or managing this debilitating condition is to raise awareness of the physical, behavioral and mental causes that lead to its emergence, and making healthy lifestyle choices that regulate blood sugar levels.

Naturally Control Blood Sugar

Glucose, the human body's key source of cellular energy, is the end product of the digestive system breaking down carbohydrates, proteins and fats for absorption in the intestines. From there, it passes into the bloodstream. Glucose also supplies energy for the brain. Normal blood glucose levels vary throughout the day. For healthy individuals, a fasting blood sugar level upon awakening is less than 100 milligrams (mg) per deciliter (dl) of blood. Before meals, normal levels are 70 to 99 mg/dl; otherwise, 100 to 125. Consistent readings above 126 indicate that lifestyle changes are needed to avoid eventual progression into full Type 2 diabetes.

When there's an inability to efficiently transport glucose from the blood into cells, cells don't receive the energy they need to function properly. "Elevated glucose levels contribute to blood vessel damage, high blood pressure and inflammation among other issues. High glucose causes insulin



Nourishing myself is a joyful experience, and I am worth the time spent on my healing.

~LOUISE L. HAY

levels to spike in an effort to draw the glucose into cells. This stresses the pancreas and causes a sugar crash, called hypoglycemia, which can lead individuals to make impulsive, poor food choices," advises Marcy Kirshenbaum, a board-certified clinical nutritionist and owner of Enhance Nutrition, in Northbrook, Illinois.

She notes, "Elevated sugar and insulin levels raise triglycerides, a fat that circulates in the blood, and cholesterol, specifically the LDL (low-density lipoprotein) levels. Triglycerides and cholesterol are important measures of heart health. Triglyceride levels of 150 mg/dl in fasting blood is a risk factor for a stroke or heart attack."

Early Heads-Up

According to the American Diabetes Association, 8.1 million of the 29.1 million individuals diagnosed with diabetes were previously unaware of any early symptoms such as dry mouth, excessive thirst, frequent urination, constant hunger (even after meals), unusual weight gain or loss and lack of energy. "Many individuals only learn of their condition from a doctor-ordered routine blood test such as the A1C glycated hemoglobin procedure, which reads

blood sugar levels over a three-month period," advises Dr. Nancy Iankowitz, a board-certified family nurse practitioner and founding director of Holistic and Integrative Healing, in Holmes, New York.

Individuals that consume large amounts of simple carbohydrates and sugars, are overweight or are exceedingly sedentary and eat unhealthy processed foods, have a higher risk for developing Type 2 diabetes.

Iankowitz's effective, patient-centered practice follows a practical, four-month healing plan that includes tracking foods, moods, blood pressure, sleeping habits and exercise, all necessary to manage or reverse Type 2 diabetes.

Effective Diet Choices

Making the highest-impact food choices is critical in the earliest stages of diabetes. That's why nutritionist and holistic integrative health practitioner Saskia Kleinert, an independent practitioner who also serves as director of the Emeryville Health & Wellness Center, in California, helps patients integrate dietary changes into everyday life.

"Patient education includes the necessity of eating low-glycemic index foods and reducing blood glucose levels, while increasing healthy fats with nuts, avocado and olive oil," advises Kleinert. She notes that antioxidant-rich plant foods are another key component of an effective dietary plan for all age groups.

The role of exercise is also vital for those needing to reverse pre-diabetes or managing diabetes aided by insulin injections. "Exercise increases the muscle cell's demand for glucose, moving it out of the blood into muscle cells that use it as fuel, and so lowering insulin levels," explains Jamie Coughlan, a naturopathic doctor who practices in Pleasanton and Pleasant Hill, California.

Dr. Angelo Baccellieri, owner of Westchester Wellness Medicine, in Harrison, New York, introduces patients to intermittent fasting, an eating pattern that helps treat insulin resistance and control blood sugar.

“The concept is predicated on going 14 to 16 hours without food, replicating how our primitive ancestors ate. They feasted when food was available and fasted during famines, sometimes going several days without eating,” advises Baccellieri, who notes that intermittent fasting can be done one day a week.

“Our biochemistry actually does very well with this approach, which isn’t hard to do when your last meal is at 7 p.m. and you skip breakfast and delay lunch the next day until 1 p.m. You can drink water with lemon, teas and black coffee throughout. By 1 p.m., the body has been 18 hours without protein and carbohydrates, allowing insulin levels to remain at a low level. Excess insulin from too much sugar shifts the body into a storage mode. Having no sugar stores available, the body can then switch into a ketogenic state that allows the body to burn fat for fuel,” explains Baccellieri.

Herbs such as turmeric reduce inflammation. Berberine can help cells use glucose efficiently. Supplements such as vitamin C, B-complex, resveratrol and pycnogenol (pine bark extract) can raise antioxidant levels, in which most pre-diabetic and diabetic individuals are deficient, according to a study published in *PubMed*. Cautious

health professionals tailor supplement recommendations to each patient.

Helpful Weight Loss

In *The Diabetes Breakthrough*, based on a scientifically tested way to reverse diabetes through weight loss, Dr. Osama Hamdy and Sheri R. Colberg, Ph.D., explain a home-based version of the 12-week Why WAIT (Weight Achievement and Intensive Treatment) program offered at the Joslin Diabetes Center, affiliated with Harvard Medical School, in Boston. WAIT allows participants to reach their weight and blood glucose goals, along with improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and liver and kidney function.

The program’s success is due to doable increases in exercising that put greater emphasis on strengthening muscles; effective ways to change bad habits; successful portion control; healthy alternatives to favorite foods; carbohydrate counting; and meals composed of the right balance of complex carbohydrates and antioxidant-rich plant foods, protein and fat, all to achieve optimum body weight and diabetes control.

No Quick Fix

Restoration of health begins with

the most important lifestyle changes.

- Replace processed and sugary foods in meals and snacks with nutrient-dense, whole foods.
- Determine possible food sensitivities with an elimination diet.
- Eat some protein with every meal.
- Eliminate environmental toxins.
- Perform some form of cardiovascular exercise and resistance training at least three to five times a week.
- Add stress-relieving practices such as yoga, tai chi or qigong.

According to Hamdy, “On average, diabetes has the potential to rob you of more than 12 years of life, while dramatically reducing the quality of life for more than 20 years through chronic pain, loss of mobility, blindness, chronic dialysis and heart disease.” Such serious consequences also include stroke, hearing impairment and Alzheimer’s, he adds.

All provide good reasons to live responsibly every day, cherishing long-term goals of laying claim to the best possible health.

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