



How I lowered my A1C in 6 months from 14.9 to diabetic free

A journey explained

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How I lowered my A1C in 6 months from 14.9 to diabetic free

My diabetic backstory

The last time I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes

I sat waiting for his arrival just like any other visit. Waiting for him to tell me I have to do better even though I convinced myself that I was doing my best. It really wasn't my best. Just a few months before, I had vision loss on a daily basis. It would go from blurriness to needing readers to read my guilty pleasure of self-help books. The vision loss shocked me because just six months before, the optometrist gave me my usual 20/20 vision results. But I have learned that diabetes is one of those "gotcha" diseases. One minute you're doing well and then - GOTCHA! Something else goes wrong.

He sprinted into the room with his face buried in my file. A quick turn of his head to see my face "Hi Ms. Kennedy, how are you?" he said. It's just automatic, I always say "fine". But in actuality, I was stressed from my job at CBS Television and eating anything I wanted to feel better. After working eleven hours each day with no break, five days a week for three years and it is my first day off in about four months, I'd probably just go home and go to bed – skipping my usual daily work out. It was April in sunny Los Angeles and my winter seasonal depression decided to stick around.

My New Year's resolution was to get into a television writer's room and so far it didn't look promising. The doctor belittled my "fine" reply with "it's time for you to start insulin shots" he said. "Your test results suggest that you are in a coma as we speak," he said. "You're A1C is 14.9" he added. He kept talking but my world just stopped. All that I could see was a flashback of me sitting on the floor next to my twin sister while she slept after giving her self an insulin shot. I didn't have diabetes at that time but I knew that I could never give myself shots.



I was already taking 500mg of Metformin twice a day or I was supposed to. I would take it religiously after each doctor's appointment until the side effects were too much and I'd convinced myself I was fine. "You can go down to the pharmacy and pick up the supplies. A nurse will call you to make an appointment to set up the demonstration of the shots. Do you have any questions?" he said as he walked toward the door. I snapped out of my flashback when he said shots again. My hysterical crying must have annoyed him. "I don't want to take shots." I cried. He showed a little compassion and took two steps away from the door. "Well, what do you want? You want your foot to be cut off? Because that's what's next" he said in a soft voice. I almost screamed as I cried. Our banter went on for another five minutes until he said: "Listen, lose the weight and then we can talk about taking you off the shots." Finally, a little bit of hope. I thought to myself, "I can do that; I've been working out." Finally, I agreed with his remedy as he walked out the door.

As I waited for the pharmacist to give me the amount of my prescription, I thought to myself, I have to get serious about this. I said that a lot in a lot of pharmacies. "That will be seventy dollars," she said. Seventy dollars for a month's supply of insulin and needles. And that was with insurance. That amount didn't include the supply of blood test strips or finger prick needles. I paid. I cried. I went home. When I got home I just looked at the medicine and something in my spirit said there's got to be another way. I began to research insulin because I research everything. The one bit of research that stood out was that insulin could make you gain weight. I thought to myself if it makes you gain weight, how could I get off of it. I was confused. Then I was angry. Then I was determined to find a way to beat the diabetes without taking the shots. I found so much information. I found information about diabetes that was never explained to me. It was amazing that it was so easily obtainable. My hope with this eBook is to provide information to individuals just like me. Someone who is struggling through this curable disease, and doesn't know the right questions to ask.

I began my research and Google became my best friend. The first question I Googled was: How to cure diabetes.

When I was first diagnosed with diabetes, I was confused

The first time I was diagnosed with diabetes

When I was prescribed the insulin shots, it had been 10 years since I was first diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. In those ten years of regular doctors appointments, the only thing I learned was that there are two types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is a disease that is diagnosed usually at birth or as a child and is a lifelong disease. It requires insulin that sometimes requires a pump that is attached to the body. I also learned that I had type 2 diabetes. That's it and nothing else. At my first visit, he asked if I had any question but I didn't know what questions to ask. I was told by the doctor to eat better and exercise more. It was kind of like telling an alcoholic to don't drink and drive. At the time I worked at a hospital as the Assistant Director of Admissions and Financial Aid for their nursing college. The president of the college had type 2 diabetes as well. I asked to meet with him hoping that he would give me a secret cure especially since he was a nurse as well. He took me into his office with sympathy. He went on to explain how he lost weight but nothing more. Maybe he, like the doctors, thought that I knew that drinking water throughout the day helps with circulation, dehydration and makes you feel fuller. Maybe he didn't know that eating right to me meant limiting fast food to once a day. When I left the president's office, I was even more confused.

The hospital provided free workshops for employees that included diabetes counseling. Finally, I was excited! I went to the workshops religiously, hoping for answers. The nurse would help me with my blood meter, weigh me, caution about food and ask how my week was going. I never understood what the numbers of the meter meant. My weight would seesaw by a pound or two each week but would steadily increase. Her encouragement to eat more fruits and vegetables to me meant eating more French fries. But the part that helped me the most was telling her how my week went. At the beginning of the same year, I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes and given the prescription to eat better while I was pregnant. A month later I lost the baby and eventually the long-term relationship that went with it.

The only good thing that came from that experience was that I no longer had gestational diabetes but the doctor did warn me to eat better and exercise more or else I could develop type 2 diabetes. Later that year my mother passed away of AIDS on September 11, 2008. Two months later I was diagnosed officially with type 2 diabetes. So, for the nurse to ask me how my week was going was tremendous because I really didn't have anyone to talk to. I didn't even realize I was telling her my life story until she suggested I meet with a psychologist. At first, I laughed it off but as the weeks passed and my seasonal depression kicked in, I needed help. I was at a high level in my career. I was a single mother to my son and my adopted niece. My brother was in prison along with my father. My other brother had his own challenges. My sister had four children, which two of them had Sickle Cell and her marriage was on the brink of divorce. At that point in my life, I didn't just need help, I wanted it.

But instead of finding a therapist, I had an epiphany. My mother had just passed away at 54 years old and never lived the life that she dreamed of. I decided that life was too short and that I needed to follow my dream of working in entertainment. Soon after, I quit my high-level job that I loved and moved from Cincinnati Ohio to Atlanta Georgia. Even with a master's degree, things didn't work out in Atlanta. I worked at Macy's as a sales associate while trying to find permanent work. Five months later we were homeless. I moved in with family only to battle my aunt's husband who was physically and emotionally abusive to my son. After the holidays, we soon moved back to my foreclosed house in Ohio. While the Lord did get me back on my feet, I was still chasing after my dream by pursuing a second masters in communications in Virginia Beach. Homelessness did not escape us there either and before I completed my degree we moved to Los Angeles. In all of that time, I only took the metformin and my health seriously for probably about a year in total and not any closer to any answers of what diabetes was.



Once again the Lord blessed us and eventually I became full-time at CBS Television, which included benefits. Curious about my health, I made an appointment with a doctor. The appointment was predictable. My A1C was higher at 9.7 from when I was diagnosed at 7.5 ten years earlier. The doctor gave me the usual 500mg of metformin but now two times per day. I was not excited about the possibility of an upset stomach, headache and occasional explosive diarrhea that came with 1 pill of metformin. Now I had to take two pills two times a day! I was more determined to get better and I did. My next visit was three months later and with working out on the elliptical three to four times a week for 30 minutes, I lowered my A1C to 9. The doctor congratulated me but encourage me to do more. Do more, I thought? I was killing myself on the elliptical burning exactly the calories I needed to burn to lose a pound a week and any extra calories I overate for the week. But then again I thought, I wasn't exactly eating the best.

At CBS I worked in the president's office and anyone who worked in that department was able to have a catered lunch, which included some weeks of buffets with desserts, snacks, sodas and any extra food from celebrity meetings. I know! I had it bad. And I couldn't let anything go to waste especially with a growing teenage boy at home. So, I took leftovers home. But it had to stop. I was closer to a 6.9 A1C, which is considered diabetic free. I had hope and I was going to meet my goal.

I began to research foods that I shouldn't eat as a diabetic. The list was long. It began with no junk food. That was easier written than observed but I tried my best. Next was no fast food. What! I was too busy to cook food during the week and too tired on the weekends. Those eleven-hour workdays quickly became me living for the weekends. The list went on to state that pasta, bread, and white bread, in particular, was not good for diabetics. How was I suppose to make sandwiches? Potatoes were next on the list, which was hard because French fries and potato chips were the last of the junk food that I was hanging on to. But soon I managed to avoid them. I started semi-meal prepping on Sundays and switching my pasta for broccoli. I thought that I was doing pretty well. In addition, I kept doing my cardio on the elliptical but went down to one or two times a week since I was doing so good on my food intake.

I was excited to have my next doctor's visit three months later. However, my A1C did not lower. It was the same – 9.

I couldn't believe it! A 9 with all the changes I made. I asked the doctor for help. He asked if I had been testing my blood with each meal. I shyly said no. I couldn't even find my meter let alone understand what it was for and what it was telling me. I knew that it tested the sugar in my blood and that's all. Every time I tested my blood it gave me a number around 189. What does that mean??? I remember when I sat next to my sister when she had gestational diabetes and giving herself insulin shots. She had a number of 557. I knew that I wasn't close to that number so I didn't heed to it. But I thought, could I get to that number fast or slow? What caused the number to rise or fall? Ugh, it was so frustrating. He gave me a new meter and after that visit, I researched "How to lower sugar levels with diabetes" and "How to read a diabetic meter".

I remember watching the movie Soul Food. I think that was the first time I heard the term "shuga" or the phrase "you got da shuga". While watching the movie I still didn't understand or relate shuga with diabetes. I just knew that the grandma didn't want her arm cut off and she later died in the film. It was sad. It reminded me of when I was five years old, living in Tampa Florida and seeing my grandfather in the hospital for the last time. We were to say goodbye. It was the first and last time I saw him with all of his limbs cut off. Before that, I don't remember much of him. I remember that he was a big man – tall and heavy. His stage name was Tiny Kennedy. He was a Blues singer. I also remember that he loved soda. At his house, he had a soda machine in his front yard. Next to his feet, he would line up five 2 Liters and drink them throughout the day while he sat on the sofa.

My mother stayed in Tampa after my grandfather passed away. It was hard but after a few years of homelessness, my mother got a section 8 house. It was a nice house with fruit trees in the back yard. We were very poor and when we ran out of food, those trees served us well. We rarely had sugar daily back then unless it was in our Kool-Aid. The rare occasion that we had sweets (what I equated to sugar) was on the first of the month when my mother would get her food stamps. We would have coconut cake, butter pecan ice cream and lots of cookies (all of my mother's favorites).

When I researched lowering sugar, I was shocked to find information about carbohydrates in addition to sugar. I found that carbohydrates are necessary for brain function. I also found that some people use the terms carbohydrates and sugar interchangeable. Now I was really confused. Carbohydrates are in pretty much in everything including the fruits and vegetables I was always encouraged to eat by the doctors. I found that carbohydrates come in two forms – simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates are bad or harder for the body to process. Simple carbohydrates are included in most process foods like potato chips and all of my mother's favorites. Could you believe it? The bad carbs were in fast food, junk food, and pastas. Complex carbohydrates are included in foods that are good for the body and have valuable vitamins and minerals with lots of fiber. They also made me feel fuller, longer. When you think of complex carbohydrates think of foods such as broccoli, leafy green vegetables, oranges, apples, and other fruits and vegetables.

If I thought my list of what I shouldn't eat as a diabetic was long before, it just got longer. There was yet another list of carbs that I could eat but should avoid like potatoes and Caribbean fruit. With my list of foods that I could eat quickly shrinking, I Googled, what foods don't have carbohydrates. I found that pretty much all foods have carbohydrates but some have very small quantities like meat. In fact, I found that chicken, fish, and turkey was the best proteins for diabetics because they have little to none of the bad fats. Fats? Bad fats? I don't want any fat. That's what I'm trying to lose, right?

Don't get me started on the fat fact-finding. Turns out that the bad fats can raise my blood sugar too! So, I switched my ground hamburger for ground turkey and baked or sautéed my chicken breast instead of frying. I had to break a long-standing, weekly relationship with Colonel Sanders and Ronald McDonald because most fast foods are cooked with bad fats. It was a very sad day. But the hardest relationship I had to break off was with the Kool-Aid man. I was addicted.

Diabetes is a diagnosis of a sugar (in each form – pure sugar, simple and complex carbohydrates) addiction. After a lot of research, I found out that our bodies do not need sugar (unlike other nutrients like protein, good or complex carbohydrates, iron, magnesium, etc.). We do not need not one gram of sugar for our bodies to function. What I did find out was that sugar is comparable to drugs. Some compare sugar to the addiction of cocaine. My addiction to the sugar in Kool-Aid was valid. It took me several months to kick the Kool-Aid habit only to be addicted to other sugary drinks like soda and juices. Even the flavored waters had additives (like artificial sugar and salt) that are bad for diabetics. I tried the sugar free drink mixes as well but found that like diet a soda, drink mixes contain aspartame, which is a harmful substance that is twice as sweet as sugar. I resorted to ice cold water with lemon or eating a piece of fruit with my water for flavor. My daily blood levels decreased drastically after I kicked my daily sugary drink habit.

You've just read the majority of my research on diabetes and how it has affected my body and my life. I hope that you have learned something that will encourage you during your journey of becoming diabetic free. You have to first make the decision that your life is more important than anything else. You have to know that you are blessed to be a blessing by using the gifts and talents that God gave you. You must then make the declaration "I AM DIABETIC FREE" because faith proceeds the manifestation. Becoming diabetic free is a journey and will take time. Only you can determine how long it will take. For some it will be a few weeks, for me it was 6 months and for others, it may take their entire life on this earth. But if you do this you will live a full life, leave a legacy with your family and honor God with the body He gave you.

The next sections of this eBook are to provide you with the tools I learned to become diabetic free. You can also subscribe to my docuseries *60 Seconds to Cure* for information and encouragement. If you have any questions, post them on my blog. May you be blessed during your journey.

What I experienced as a Diabetic

What happened to my body as a result of being diabetic

I had frequent urination

Whenever I have eaten too much sugar, I can guarantee that I will have frequent urination – urgently. Typically every hour I was going to the bathroom. This is horrible because it doesn't matter where you are at or if you cut back on your water consumption. You can be in LA traffic and have an attack. Once my blood level is under control, my need to urinate goes back to normal. But as soon as my blood level is off the charts, the frequent urination comes back. This interrupts my important sleeping routine.

I experienced numbness in my feet and hands

At night I had a hard time falling asleep. No matter how much I moved or positioned myself, my legs and feet were numb. I researched it and found out that it was a side effect of diabetes called neuropathy. I had not been taking care of myself. I had experienced a severe heartbreak with my twin sister that left us evicted. As a result, my son and I were homeless again. My eating habits were good but not great. I didn't want to go outside unless I had to leave. I became severely depressed. This meant I rarely moved and forget about doing any exercising. Within a week, the numbness and burning sensation included my hands and arms. It was very painful and turned my palms and the bottom of my feet purple. Hanging my limbs off the side of the bed and eventually using pain medication helped me get through the night. Day by day as the depression lifted I would exercise more, which made me feel better mentally and physically and the numbness went away. I found out that the numbness was due to poor circulation. The sugar in my blood caused my circulation to slow down. I wasn't getting what I needed (nutrients, oxygen) to my feet and hands. This was particularly scary to me because of what I remember of my grandpa. The day we said goodbye to him, he did not have arms or legs. He was only left with his torso because of complications of diabetes.

I always wondered why diabetics received amputations. What was the process? I found out that it starts with numbness. A coworker who had diabetes had to have her toe amputated. It started with numbness and she cut her toe and did not feel it. The toe became infected. Because she didn't feel the cut or infection, she didn't get the proper care for it and the doctors had to amputate it. Fortunately, the infection did not spread to the rest of her foot; leg or body or else she would have had those areas amputated as well. I love my toes and I think I have pretty feet. So, I could not imagine having my toe amputated. My coworker had to relearn how to walk and adjust living without having a toe. I think we take for granted what the Lord has blessed us with and how important one little toe can affect our lives. This just proves how important it is to take care of every part of our bodies rather it is physically, spiritually or emotionally. Therefore, I knew that the situation with my sister had to be addressed. And after I worked through the situation with a free therapist I found at my church (Lakewood Church), I didn't experience the numbness again unless my blood levels were elevated.

I experienced dehydration

One of the side effects of diabetes is severe dehydration. I drank at least 64 oz. of water a day. Because of that, I did not experience severe dehydration or dry skin unless I drank sugary drinks again. When I experience severe dehydration, not only was my mouth dry consistently throughout the day but also the back of my throat felt like an Arizona dry land. My skin, especially my feet and hands felt like sandpaper. To remedy this problem, I cut out the sugary drinks, took vitamins like Omega 3 and kept lotion in reach.

Even if you don't experience dehydration it is important for diabetics to drink plenty of water throughout the day. If the body thinks that it is being dehydrated it can cause blood sugar levels to rise. Water also moves impurities and toxins from foods out of our system by way of urination.

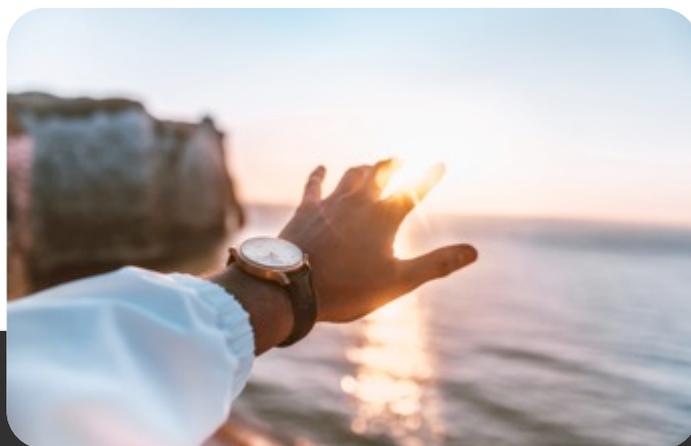
I developed an eye sty

One morning my left eye began to itch uncontrollably. It bothered me but not enough to do anything about it but splash it with water. The itching went on for about a week before I decided that something was really wrong. By that time it had drained a few times and became crusty over each night. I would wake up to a swollen eye and eventually the side of my face. I thought it was a sinus infection and took medicine. The swelling went down a little but the pain in my eye was constant. I finally went to the doctor and guess what? Sure enough, he said it was because of complications due to diabetes. He said that sometimes when the sugar gets into the bloodstream it causes blockage, especially in the smallest veins around the eye.

When the swelling of my face went down completely, a white lump was left on my eye and that's where the blockage ended. It was called an eye sty. The doctor prescribed an ointment to put on my eye. But before I got to the pharmacy, the lump/white head on my eyelid exploded. Yes, it was disgusting but at least I didn't have to pay for the medication. The itching and swelling went away and I haven't had any problems with an eye sty again.

I had vision loss

Before my visit to the doctor, earlier that year, I lost my vision. I was not totally blind but what was clear before was very blurry especially when there wasn't a lot of light or at night. It made it hard to drive and read small print. It was very frustrating because I had never had vision problems before. I bought some reading glasses from the 99-cent store and that corrected the problem. In addition, after I made habit changes, I no longer needed the reading glasses. It was only when I ate an excess of sugar that I experienced vision problems again.



I experienced swollen legs and feet

Before I was diagnosed with diabetes, I would have swollen feet and legs every now and again. But the swelling would go down after a good nights sleep and propping my legs. However, after I continued to ignore the symptoms of diabetes and the opportunities to change my habits, my legs and feet began to swell more often. Previous remedies did not work. The swelling got worse during my job at CBS, which required me to sit for 11 hours a day. Some immediate cures were cutting back on salt, cutting out soda and fried foods and taking time to walk each hour even if it was just to the bathroom.

I would make it a point to walk for several hours on Saturday and Sunday but daily walking helped with the swelling. I eventually bought a desk elliptical. I could see more changes in my legs and feet when I used it on a daily basis. I would try to cycle every hour for about 10 minutes. But I didn't see a real change until I quit my job at CBS.

I experienced continuous yeast infections

Everyone has had at least one yeast infection in their life for one reason or another and they are no fun. I learned the hard way that diabetics are able to get chronic yeast infections. The over the counter remedies do not work for chronic yeast infections. A doctor must prescribe a medication to remedy it. After taking over the counter medications for about a month, I was told by the doctor that diabetes was the cause of my misery.

I was advised to have a gastric bypass surgery

When my A1C was at 14.9, the doctor suggested that I get the gastric bypass surgery. He said that I qualified because of my A1C results and my lifestyle choices. He also said that my insurance would cover it. I was scared and confused. I didn't believe that I looked like the poster child of morbidly obese. My mother had two friends who died shortly after having the surgery. I had watched many celebrities who had the surgery, lose the weight only to gain it back. Some passed away like the rapper Heavy D; which affected me deeply.

I believe that the remedy of gastric bypass surgery can be used for diabetics to lose weight but ultimately it will not solve the problem of lacking good and lasting eating and living habits. After the surgery, if you don't have the right habits, you can fall back into the same problem of obesity like my mother's friends. Thank God I watched a few gastric bypass surgeries on YouTube. I could not bear to go through a surgery like that so I quickly decided to change my habits. I was also angry with the doctor for quickly suggesting the surgery and not to change my habits or give me the resources to do so first.

All I had to do was say yes and the doctor said I could have a fresh start. But I asked the question "A fresh start to what"? The gastric bypass surgery is a process in and of itself. The way I understood the surgery, it would make your stomach smaller so you would eat less. I wondered how decreasing my stomach would stop me from eating fast foods, sugar, simple carbohydrates, emotional eating or get me to move more. To me, getting the gastric bypass surgery was the equivalent to renovating a house with a bad foundation. You may have some changes and you look nice but when an earthquake comes, all of your hard work won't hold up. I turned down the surgery in search of healthier eating habits and building a stronger foundation physically and spiritually. With the Holy Spirit, I began to create my own regiment, which led to my A1C success.

How diabetes made me feel

When my blood sugar levels were too low or too high, I would feel horrible. I felt nauseous, I had headaches, my body was weak and ached, I became dehydrated, my breathing was labored, I would become dizzy or faint and my stomach would knot up. I also found myself anxious and very curt. And in extreme cases, I would tremble or have the shakes. Finding and maintaining blood sugar level balance is hard work. That is really what is all about – balance. Because I did not put my health and wellbeing first, my blood sugar became unbalanced. And when blood sugar is unbalanced for long periods of time, diabetes develops.

I put work before eating and therefore eating unhealthy. I put other people's needs before exercising. I let my emotions and lack of spirituality limit me. I had to make my health a priority and find balance in everything. I had to realize that yes, taking care of my family was important but I had to take care of myself first to be able to take care of anyone else. I had to realize that yes, work is important but I had to make time for me to be healthy even if that meant finding a new job. As I made these changes in my life, God protected and provided for me. I found balance in my life and began to feel better.

What habits I learned to lower my A1C

My eating habits had to change

I learned to set an eating schedule

Doctors and a lot of my research encouraged eating five to six meals a day, which is about every two hours. I didn't realize until later that those meals should have been small meals. An example would be a cheese stick, a handful of almonds and a small apple instead of a combo meal for each meal. Once I got the portion control down and began eating complex carbohydrates and lean proteins, I enjoyed the frequency of the meals. After about three weeks I began to feel fuller most of the day and had to force myself to eat.

Then I thought about it. If I'm constantly feeding my body, good or bad sugar, when does it have time to burn off the sugar (that has turned into fat) that I already have stored? Eating five times a day, I saw little to no change in my daily blood sugar levels. In addition to the other small changes I made, I decided to allow my body to use the stored sugar as fuel especially since my job required me to sit most of the day.

I decided to eat three times a day or less with one snack. Eventually, I ate when I was hungry. Breakfast was a must. I would eat breakfast by 9 am each day, which included a three-egg, ham and cheese omelet, sautéed spinach and a bowl of Caribbean fruit. I would eat lunch at 1pm each day and that would include a large Mediterranean chicken salad with balsamic dressing. At 4pm I would have a small snack like an apple. I would drink 64 oz. of water throughout the day. If I had a craving or was hungry I would chew gum. I would get off work at 7pm and settled down at 8 or 9pm after exercising. At that point, I was not hungry or too tired to eat. Since I would go to bed by 11pm, I would just look forward to breakfast. But sometimes that would be hard because I would wake up hungry in the middle of the night, which is not good for keeping a good sleeping routine. Eventually, I would have a small snack like cheese before bed so that I could sleep through the night.

With further research, I learned that muscle burns stored sugar (fat). So, I concluded that if I ate less and gave my muscle time to burn the store sugar my daily blood sugar should go down and sure enough it did. Making that change lowered by daily blood sugar down by 20 points. I learned that eating 6 times a day helped to control my appetite. However, eating 3 times a day worked better, giving my muscle time to use the fat and sugar that was already stored in my body.

I learned that counting didn't count with diabetes

In the beginning, I counted and tracked everything including calories, fiber, protein, steps walked, exercises, types of food, daily blood levels, and the list goes on. If it went into or affected my body, I tracked it. It helped me to make sense of what was going on. If something didn't make sense, I would research it. Counting gave me understanding, peace and ultimately concepts to change my living habits. However, ultimately, counting did not work. Eliminating sugar, limiting good carbohydrates and making the other habit changes allowed me to see the results of lowering my A1C.

I learned that to make time to prepare for the week was essential

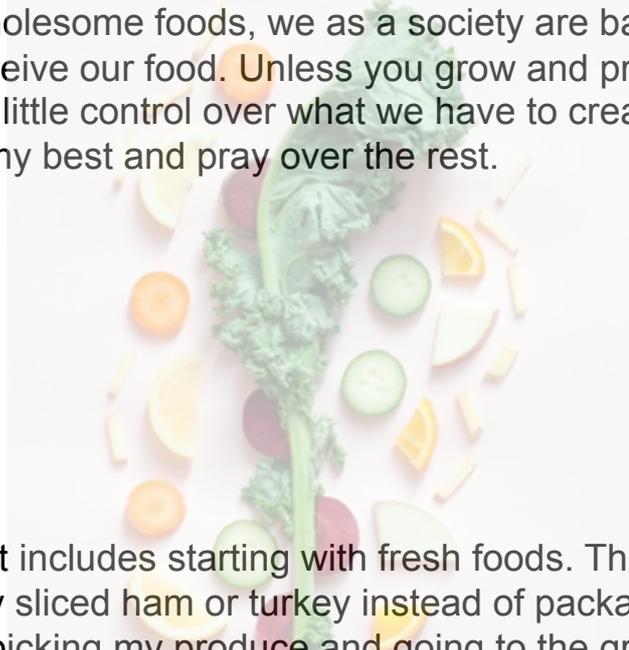
We all live a busy life and I was no different. While I was changing my habits, it was probably the most stress-less my life had ever been; yet it still had its challenges. Incorporating meal prep Sunday into my week was necessary. During this time I was blessed to have had the resources of a chef Monday through Friday for breakfast, lunch, snacks and most dinners at my job. However, I did need to plan for unplanned meals and weekend meals. This allowed me to stick to my new habits, longer.

I learned that initially, hunger pains were unavoidable

Switching from eating at 9, 11, 1, 3, 5, 7:30pm and 9:30pm, to my new eating routine, I would get extremely hungry between meals. At the beginning of my new routine of eating at 9, 1, 4 and 7:30pm I would have hunger headaches. To remedy the hunger headaches, I would make sure I was not thirsty first and then would take a couple of aspirin. Instead of having an extra snack, I would eat gum, which would help until it was time for me to eat again. Again, this only happened at the beginning of the switch. I believe it was sugar withdrawal.

I learned that the quality of food was important

When it comes to food, I have learned that food companies and their counterparts do not have my diabetic needs as their top priority. It's not their fault. They are catering (no pun intended – ok maybe) to my necessity to have what I want, right now. Because I did not have a firm foundation regarding eating habits and nutrition, when it was time for me to make decisions about how to fuel my body, I relied on grocery stores and advertisements to determine my choices. You mean all-white chicken nuggets are not healthy for me? You mean the healthy foods are in the middle of the store and not easy to find? So, packaged foods have all kinds of preservatives and toxins that can harm me? I had to learn that the whole foods are the best for me and for battling diabetes. I realize that nothing is pure. No matter how hard I try to find wholesome foods, we as a society are battling a standard of how we receive our food. Unless you grow and produce your own food we have little control over what we have to create our meals. All I can do is do my best and pray over the rest.



Doing my best includes starting with fresh foods. This means going to the deli for my sliced ham or turkey instead of packaged meats. It means hand picking my produce and going to the grocery weekly. If I can't get my food fresh then I will get it frozen. And finally, if I can't get it frozen then I will get it canned. I had to realize that fresh is always more money. Frozen foods are just a little more expensive than canned. But canned foods have so many preservatives in them. My body was not designed to process preservatives and toxins effectively on a daily basis for good health. So, if so many preservatives are consumed and it is not broken down effectively, it stays trapped in my body causing sickness especially if I don't exercise or drink water. Unfortunately, finances dictate how healthy we can be. That's why I believe type 2 diabetes is a poverty disease. All we can do is our best with what we have and God will bless us.

I learned that how my food was prepared was important

When I had sister locks, I had a stylist who didn't have a stove in her house. She used to lock my hair in her basement and I would have to pass through her kitchen to get to the basement. When I passed through, I never looked at her appliances, until she told me that she was a raw foodist. She stopped cooking her food because cooking took a lot of the nutrients out of the food. She was also a vegetarian. She was a beautiful small- framed woman with beautiful mahogany skin. She shocked me when she told me she was 50 years old. Hand to my bible she didn't look a day past 30. However, she didn't convince me to stop cooking my food. I love cooking. Especially for other people. But eventually, I learned to eat more raw food.

Raw food takes longer to break down in my body. It allows the body to absorb all the vitamins and nutrients we need and makes me feel fuller longer. If I want my food cooked, I start with steaming it. It provides a nice texture, allows me to add healthy oils if I want it while allowing the food to keep most of its vitamins and nutrients. Other methods of cooking that I prefer to keep the integrity of the food are (in order) boiling, baking or sautéing. I avoid frying food as much as possible. Its all a matter of taste but it is important to know so that I can provide the best vitamins and nutrients for my body through food.

Some people rely on supplements like whey protein etc. But I prefer to fuel my body naturally. I believe that my body will work better with what was intended for the body. If it is from the earth, I believe that God intended it for consumption or use. We are the ones who chooses how to use it. Some things are better in moderation. For example, some diabetics choose not to eat potatoes because they are high in carbohydrates. In the beginning, I would avoid potatoes. But I have learned that potatoes are from the earth and have some healthy attributes but I should have them in moderation so that my blood sugars do not rise.



I learned that packaged foods while convenient are not healthy for diabetics

Prepackaged foods are horrible for the body. This includes snack cakes to microwaveable meals. They usually have lots of sugar, salt and preservatives that the body can't break down effectively. Prepackaged foods provide very little to no nutrients or vitamins. A diabetic should avoid these types of foods.

I learned that my body needs supplemental vitamins

Ideally, we need to get our vitamins from our foods. That is how God designed how our bodies would receive nutrients. But when we don't eat enough of the right foods are body still needs the vitamins to function correctly. In order to compensate for the lack of vitamins consumed with food, I supplement with the necessary vitamins in pill form. I take fish oil twice a day, magnesium, vitamin D, a multi-vitamin and Holy Basil. When I take these vitamins, I feel better and they help to process the food I digest better. I can tell a difference if I don't take my vitamins. I feel sluggish and I have digestive problems. However, when I eat with eating habits, I can tell when I need to cut back on the supplements.

I learned that sugar and carbohydrates are terms that the industry uses interchangeably

A lot of people use the word sugar and carbohydrates interchangeably. When people think about sugar they think of white cane sugar. Sugar is a carbohydrate and that is why when you look at a food label you will find the measure under the carbohydrate heading. White cane sugar and simple carbohydrates should be avoided for diabetics. But there are some carbohydrates that are good to eat and others that should be eaten in moderation. A diabetic should eat complex/dense carbohydrates and when they are trying to lower their A1C and daily blood levels they should even lower those carbohydrates to meet success. I receive the majority of my carbohydrates from fruits and vegetables. The body does not need sugar to function at all. The body does need carbohydrates to function especially for brain function. That is why when I lack the necessary carbohydrates I get headaches and I begin to feel weak.

I learned that full-fat foods are better than fat-free

I prefer full-fat foods. Most full-fat foods have lower carbohydrates compared to their light or fat-free versions. The healthy full-fat variations usually taste better and make you feel fuller longer.

Healthy fats are very important for diabetics. Olive oil and butter are the fats I choose to cook with. Olive oil, in particular, is heart healthy.

I also prefer eggs with yolks. The yolks are the fat in the egg. Some advise to avoid the yolks and eat only the egg whites. While egg whites have their benefits so do the yolks. They also taste better.

I learned that fiber is important

When I switched my eating habits to incorporate low carbohydrates, I also increased my fiber intake. Fiber is great for diabetics. In fact, it helps to digest carbohydrates better. So a high carbohydrate item like beans (which is also high in protein – a necessary nutrient for diabetics) can be consumed because they are also high in fiber.

The other side of fiber is constipation. If I didn't transition fiber into my diet slowly or effectively I would experience extreme abdominal pain; especially if I didn't drink my allotted water for the day. I used water and over-the-counter constipation medicine to remedy the problem. I also learned to eat fruit when I ate fiber to help with constipation. Overall, incorporating fiber in my diet made me feel fuller longer and I believe it helped to lower my daily blood levels.

My movement habits had to change

I learned that when lowering A1C, exercise is not #1

When it comes to lowering A1C, food intake is the most important factor. What I put in my body is more important. Once food consumption is under control, the body can begin to heal itself. Exercise is second to food intake. Exercise helps the body do what it is designed to do. It helps with circulation and it improves your mood.

I have been guilty of over eating and thinking I'll just go to the gym and work off the extra slice of pizza I ate. Then I would run to the scale to see the results only to be heartbroken and frustrated. When the body is not working correctly i.e. diabetes, you won't see the results on the scale. When you have diabetes you have to concentrate on lowering your A1C, getting healthy and surviving. I had to learn that losing weight was not as important anymore. However, once I was able to lower my A1C, I was able to lose weight that I couldn't lose in over 20 years.

I learned that walking is the best exercise for diabetics

After a little research, I learned that walking was the best cardio exercise for diabetics. Before my research, I took long, leisurely walks that last at least 30 minutes to 2 hours daily. Fast walking speeds up the heart rate but also causes too much stress allowing for stress hormones to be released in the body. High stress for diabetics affects daily blood sugar rates. I was sold. No more killing myself (although I learned to enjoy it) on the elliptical for 2 hours anymore. The walks were great. I found myself breathing deeply more and enjoyed walking around my neighborhood. But as daylight saving fell back and we lost light, I didn't want to walk outside by myself anymore.

I was lost. I couldn't walk on the treadmills because it would make my knees inflame which would make it hard for me to walk throughout the day. In addition, because my job required me to sit for 11 hours a day, my legs would swell to the point that my ankles became the size of grapefruits. I needed help. I sure wasn't going to get up early in the morning to walk. I'm not a morning person. I made a vow to walk during the day on the weekends. But I needed something more. I found one of those desk elliptical online. I was hesitant because I didn't think it would work but I was desperate. When it arrived I did a ten-minute routine every hour or sometimes longer if I knew no one would be around. Sure enough, it worked! The daily swelling of my legs went down and my circulation improved.



I learned that building muscle is important

Think about it. Most diabetics carry the majority of their weight from the hips up. The fat surrounds the important organs. Diabetes begins when those organs start to fail because of the fat. Ask yourself, have you seen many diabetics who have upper body muscle? When I found out that muscle hates fat (stored sugar) I noticed that I lacked upper body muscle. My legs were very muscular but my upper body lacked any muscle. My core was very weak to the point that it was hard to get up and easy to fall down when I tried to sit down. As I did more research I learned that when fat surrounds the vital organs (heart, kidneys, etc.) it is harder for them to function and the body is more likely to develop diabetes. I began to lift weights to become stronger and build muscle. In addition to lowering my daily blood levels, I became more confident. And although I didn't lose any weight, I looked better and firmer. I looked for a weight lifting program online. I found one that gradually raised the weights from 5 to 25 pounds over the six months.

I learned that HIIT training does not work for diabetics

I remember the day I fell in love with the elliptical machine. I was at the YMCA working on my second hour of HIIT training. Of course, I read somewhere that I could burn double the calories on the elliptical compared to the treadmill. In addition, it would not cause my knees to inflame. I was trained to believe that exercise is meant to beat up the body. The worse I felt the more I believed that I was losing weight. However, there was no weight loss. I blamed it on eating habits or anything else but continuing to believe that in order for me to lose weight I had to hurt myself during exercise. I convinced myself to feel that it felt good. Unfortunately, even on a low level, my heart rate was always ten percent higher. I later found out that this wasn't good. Having a very high heart rate for that long, while working out puts you in a fight or flight mode. Working out in a fight or flight mode (such as HITT training) for a diabetic, only raises their daily blood levels. I began to adopt peaceful exercise (like yoga and slow walking), which helped me to lower my A1C and eventually lose weight.

My rest habits had to change

I learned that rest habits are very important for lowering A1C

I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety while completing my first master's degree. I had learned how to manage it eventually with anti-depressants and anxiety medicine on and off until I could not afford them anymore. With the problems I was having at work and what I thought was a dead end to my television writing career, I finally felt that I needed to see a therapist. She diagnosed me with severe depression and high anxiety. The doctor placed me with a weekly therapist and a low dosage of Cymbalta and Clonazepam, which was raised slightly before I felt well. With the combination of medicine, I was able to think clearly and work through my problems at work as well as sticking to my new diet and workout routine. However, eventually I decided to lean more on God and my rest habits to elevate depression and anxiety symptoms.

If you've noticed throughout my diabetic backstory, when I had high blood levels or when my A1C numbers would rise, it was when I had trauma or stress. I believe that diabetes and emotional health is linked. I strongly believe one can't be managed without the other. I believe diabetes is a poverty disease and since stress is a symptom of poverty they must be managed together.

I learned to stay away from stressors

I learned very quickly and my therapist and God that I needed to stay away from stressors confirmed it. This included people as well as events. I was raised as a passive girl. It became important to me to make everyone happy despite how I felt or to negate my needs. Needless to say, I allowed stress in my life. I didn't like it but I allowed it. Through reading devotionals regarding stress and a lot of research, I found strength in God, methods to rest more and set boundaries. I also began to identify potential stressors and stressful people in advance. This all didn't happen overnight. But once I began to avoid stressors and to take care of myself, my daily diabetic numbers improved slightly. However, what was more important was that I began to have more confidence and did less emotional eating.

I learned to be closer to God, relying on Him more

Until my visit to the doctor, I felt that I had a very good relationship with God. I went to church regularly, was involved in several ministries within my church and read a devotional daily. At the same time, I was yearning for relationship. Specifically, I was looking for good, healthy relationships. I had already rid myself of toxic relationships and stressors. I also learned how to avoid stressors and stressful people. But the other side of that kind of peace is loneliness. It was hard for me to connect with people. Even being involved with life groups or ministries, it was hard to connect. Believe it or not, I believe God did that on purpose. I believe that what destiny He has for me, at that point in time, He wanted me to rely and depend on Him. I learned to put Him first in everything that I did, needed and wanted. That meant starting and ending the day with Him. It meant having a real relationship with Him. So, when I felt sad, mad, needed a direction, an apartment, a bill paid or a door to be closed, I called on Him first.

I learned that sleep is very important for diabetics

One thing that I have found to be true is that rest is important. Even God rested on the seventh day and I am nowhere close to being God so I must rest. In my past, I use to go go go. I would work two and three jobs, watch television until I fell asleep and do it all over again. I barely stopped to eat. I would never eat breakfast, work through lunch and between 3pm and 5pm I'd be starving and ready to rip someone's head off. I didn't prepare a meal ahead of time. So, I had no choice but to get a combo meal. And since it had "meal" in the title it must be what I should eat right? Nevertheless, I found that sleep and having a sleep regiment is very important. It would help with lowering my daily blood levels and ultimately A1C numbers.

Most diabetics have high stress or trauma in their life. That is why it is important to get rid of it or avoid it. The opposite of stress is rest. I began to go to bed no later than 11pm each day rather it be the week or weekend. Of course, this was the rule and there would be exceptions. I woke up no later than 7am each day. Every once in a while I would allow a nap but I avoided them to keep my daily routine.

I also incorporated yoga and other mindfulness rituals in my daily routine. My mind was constantly going. I still have a problem with taking a mindful break. But I realized that I have to force myself to stop and take deep breaths and focus on a sound or an affirmation. One ritual that has helped me to develop a healthy rest routine is to strengthen my prayer life and reading daily devotionals. Adding those rituals allowed me to have restful nights of sleep and peaceful days.

I had to learn how to remove stressful people from my life

I have had a lot of not just stress but real trauma in my life. The Lord has protected me each time. I have also been the kind of person that people could rely on. If something was wrong, I was there to help in any way that I could. Rather it is of my resources, my time or myself. And as a Christian that is what is required. But I had to learn that there must be a balance to take care of oneself. Anything more than that, I was trying to play God.

I had to learn that I could not be everything to anyone and everyone. I had to make a hierarchy of what was important to me. I also had to make taking care of me a priority. Everything else, I had to learn that God would take care of. I'm giving you an example of a giving person. An unhealthy giving person does not realize boundaries and gives more than he or she receives. They may even reject receiving. But the Lord has taught me the law of reciprocation. When you give, you should be ready and excited to receive so that you can give again. A visual example is when your hand opens to give someone something; it is now open to receive. To put it another way, if you pour out what you have, then you have to be ready to be poured into.



Some people find this hard to do. I did and even felt guilty when I would tell people no so that I could take care of myself. I could have been called a people pleaser. You have to realize what you have ownership of and what you don't have ownership of. Other people's opinions are something that you don't have ownership of. Let them have their opinion and you keep your truth. It will give you peace. You have to take care of you because no one else will. No one else knows how to take care of you except for God. Your mother may come close or even your spouse. A doctor can only help you if you allow them to do so and even then you have to make the decision to allow them to take care of you. I'm saying all of this because stress comes at us daily.

Some stress you can't avoid but you can determine how you handle it. For a diabetic stress and trauma can raise daily blood levels and ultimately A1C levels. So, you must get rid of stress and stressful people. This may be a long process and it will require you to rely on God for wisdom and direction. For example, leaving a stressful job may take time to transition to the career of your dreams. Another example would be deciding what friends and family members you must remove from your inner circle or disassociate with altogether. Maya Angelou once said, "When people show you who they are the first time, believe them" and I added, "and proceed with caution". For example, you just met a woman that you would like to call a friend. You decide to hang out. A situation occurs and you notice that she has lied in one way or another. I believe that lying leads to other unsavory characteristics like manipulation and stealing. It may have begun with a "small lie" or a lie against herself but it was still a lie. At that point, I would proceed with caution. I can nip it in the bud and ask why she lied and see how she would react or I can decide that my time is not worth the relationship.

Removing stressors can also be as little as not watching the *Real Housewives of Atlanta*, avoiding a traffic jam or hiring someone to mow your lawn. It is all about what is important to you. Removing stressors from your life is detrimental for a diabetic. The stress can trigger unhealthy habits. Therefore, I believe that stress and emotional health is important to becoming diabetic free.

Exactly what I did to lower my A1C and be diagnosed as diabetic free

Every body is different and no two bodies will experience a change in the same manner. Believe me, there are things that I did to lower my A1C that my sister (who is my twin) also did and she did not realize the same benefits. While there are general habits that we can do such as eating right and moving more, I say this because I want to encourage you to try what I tried and hopefully it works for you. But if it does not, be encouraged to research and find things that will help and work for your body. I encourage you not to buy into the one remedy or pill fits all mentality. God created our bodies to uniquely work from what he created (whole foods in moderation) and for our bodies to move. We were not meant to sit for long periods of time. We need oxygen and movement to process the food or energy that we eat. Our emotional health plays an important part in how we accept and react to food. The addictions that we have developed because of culture, poverty, excess, and belief have to be broken. That is where our spirituality comes in to play. As we are only human, we need help to break the addiction and live the life we are destined to have and fulfill our purpose. I hope these words and strategies encourage you.

How I lowered my A1C in 6 months from 14.9 to Diabetic Free

- After struggling and admittedly ignoring my diabetic diagnosis for 10 years, I began to develop complications of the diagnosis (eye sty, chronic yeast infections, severe dehydration, etc.).
- I went to the doctor and was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes with an A1C of 14.9.
- The doctor prescribed insulin shots and told me that if I lost weight, he would take me off the shots.
- I bought the medication but was scared to give myself shots.
- I researched insulin and how it affected the body. I found out that insulin makes you gain weight. I was determined to find a way to become diabetic free without medicine.
- After a lot of research, I found that certain foods and practices can raise daily blood levels (DBL) and eventually A1C numbers.
I eliminated fast food because the way that it is prepared (bad oils, high salt, and sugar) raises daily blood levels.
I eliminated processed foods (anything that is prepackaged) because of the preservative that are used can raise DBL.

- I eliminated sodas because of the high sugar; caffeine and salt used can raise DBL. The caffeine can also raise stress levels.
- I eliminated fried foods.
- I eliminated simple carbohydrates like breads and pastas.
- I remove stressors and stressful people from my life.
- I found out stressful workouts raised my DBL. I stopped HIIT workouts.
- I stopped counting calories and weighing myself.
- I didn't deprive myself and allowed moderation of some foods.

This is what I allowed

- I drank 64 oz. of water or more a day.
- I ate eggs or an omelet, sautéed spinach and a small bowl of fruit for breakfast. For lunch, I had a grilled chicken breast with a large Mediterranean salad. For dinner, I had baked chicken, fish or pork with steamed vegetables. For snacks, I had an apple, orange or almonds.
- I ate some carbohydrates in moderation like potatoes and corn.
- For at least 3 months I eliminated any foods that contained sugar like cakes and desserts. After 3 months I allowed treats if it was during a party or special occasion.
- I lowered my carbohydrate intake to 20 grams per day.
- I prayed, read my devotional, relied on God and my spiritual life more.
- I practiced mindfulness.
- I enjoyed more vegetables and fruits.
- I found supportive friends, created vision boards and affirmations.
- I found a weight lifting routine.
- I learned how to use my DBL meter and understood the readings.
- I created moderation days on holidays and special occasions.
- When I overate I questioned my behavior and reasons for overeating or poor eating choices.
- I regularly tested my A1C every three months.
- I took vitamins including magnesium, vitamin D, Fish Oil, and Holy Basil.
- I put a meal schedule in place. I ate every 2 hours at first and then every 4 hours with portion control until I ate only when I was hungry.
- I lifted weights 3 days a week and walked my neighborhood 5 days a week for 20 minutes each. I used a desk elliptical at work.
- I learned that gaining muscle helps to reduce fat and regulate sugar or insulin.
- I learned that simply walking is all the exercise needed for diabetics. Strenuous exercise raises DBL. Walking allows nutrients to circulate within the body.

- What will allow better food absorption and eventual weight loss is proper food intake (more protein, fewer carbohydrates, sugar elimination, increased water intake, portion control, and moderation).
- After 6 months the doctor determined that I was diabetic free with an A1C test result of 6.9.

After I made these habit changes, I didn't have many complications and I didn't have to take medication. I felt better, enjoyed the foods that I loved in moderation and enjoyed life. I began to see improvements within a couple of weeks of serious commitment.

It is unfortunate that living diabetic free is made to be so complicated. Our busy lifestyles require us to rely on fast food, and quick or easy choices. But if we put ourselves, and our health first then we can be diabetic free and enjoy the life God intended us to live. I think that because diabetes is such a cumbersome topic, many dismiss simple cures to the disease until it is too late and we only see the amputations and fatalities of the disease. This eBook is not exhaustive. That is why I created a [website](#) for additional information. If you have questions, please post them on my [blog](#) or [social media](#). It is my desire to answer each one of your questions and encourage you with your journey. In addition, please subscribe to my docuseries *60 Seconds to Cure*. Each video will demonstrate how I lowered my A1C from 14.9 to Diabetic Free in 6 months. I hope that they will encourage you along the way. My prayer is that you will enjoy being diabetic free too.