

Type 2 Diabetes...It's Preventable and Reversible

March 2009 - Written for The Daily Planet, Telluride, CO

By Lynn Mayer, MA, CNC

Although a life-long Democrat, there have been distinct moments in which I become Republican. One of those occasions happened during the last Presidential bidding process. It was when Governor Mike Huckabee in his endeavor to be the Republican candidate was asked about his position on health care reform. His response: *"we don't have a health care crisis. We have a health crisis. 80% of the \$2 trillion we spend on health care in this country is spent on chronic disease. If we don't change the health of this nation by focusing on prevention, we're never going to catch up with the costs no matter what plan we have."*

It was music to my ears. What a notion: a candidate who understands the concept of prevention. Hallelujah! I wanted him in the White House that very day to get started.

Governor Huckabee speaks from experience. He reversed his own diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes in a healthy weight loss of 105 pounds during a 10 month period from June 2003 through March 2004. The weight loss and reversal of diabetes was accomplished by letting go of his reliance on fast food and the southern custom of battering and frying all food groups. He was guided to make healthier meal choices (lean meats, vegetables and fruits) and to add exercise to his daily routine. From his personal experience Governor Huckabee created "Healthy Arkansas", teaching and encouraging the state's citizens towards a healthier way of life as a better approach to reducing health care and insurance costs.

Diabetes II, often referred to as adult onset diabetes, is an elevated blood sugar due to a breakdown in the body's energy use. It is an illness that is both preventable and reversible. Knowledge and a healthy dose of self-discipline in one's daily choices can go a long way to prevent its onset. The same can be said for those who already have it. The health destroying effects of the complications of the disease can be lessened; the dependency on insulin and the spiral of medications the diabetics soon finds themselves on reduced when people take a pro-active approach.

Type 2 Diabetes does not fall out of the sky and land unsuspectingly. It is earned. It is the result of a lifestyle of overeating carbohydrates and the consumption of the SAD diet: The Standard American Diet full of refined carbohydrates and processed foods. These foods are high in sugar and low in the nutrients needed for the energy metabolism pathways in the body.

The body has a very narrow range of allowance as to sugar/glucose in the blood. When carbohydrates are eaten, the brain signals the pancreas to send out the hormone of insulin in response. Insulin's job is to escort the sugar out of the blood and into the cells to be burned as fuel or to be stored as glycogen in the liver and muscles for immediate need in the future. The problem is that there is really only a modest amount of glucose needed by the body and stored as glycogen at any one time. When we exceed the body's need, the insulin's job is to turn the excess sugar into triglycerides and store it as fat. High triglyceride levels and excess weight are evidence of an overeating of carbohydrates. It is often a first sign that you are headed down the road to diabetes if you don't course-correct your lifestyle.

High sugar as well as high insulin in the blood are damaging to the tissues of the body, another reason that the body is obsessed with keeping their levels in a narrow range. Both cause inflammation in the lining of the blood vessels, the arteries, the capillaries and then in the organ tissues that the blood supplies. The organs of finest capillary content are the eyes and the kidneys, the organs that are often the first consequence in the diabetic disease.

We can blame heredity, but the findings are that it is the pattern of eating that influences the cells. If diabetes runs in your family, yes, there is a potential genetic weakness and propensity towards

it. It is all the more reason to be mindful of the health of your diet and exercise routine. Making conscious decisions can keep diabetes at bay.

To help prevent diabetes:

- Refrain from eating refined carbohydrates and sugars (processed and packaged foods). Eat whole grains, whole fresh fruits and vegetables as your carbohydrate source.
- Include proteins and fats in all meals and snacks. Carbohydrates act as the kindling on your metabolic fire while proteins and fats act as the slow burning logs to keep steady fire stoked.
- Include chromium rich foods in your diet - brewer's yeast, liver, chicken, fresh wheat germ, whole grains and mushrooms. Insulin needs the close cooperation of infinitesimal amounts of chromium to escort glucose through the cell walls
- Reduce the stress. One of the adrenal gland hormones (epinephrine) that is released when one is in a fight-or-flight response turns off the release of insulin. Ongoing and unresolved stress can upset the balance of pancreatic hormones and bring on diabetes.
- Eat every 2-3 hours. This helps in balancing your blood sugar level and takes the load off the adrenal glands, reducing their stress.
- Exercise. Daily.

Governor Huckabee rightly concludes, "We have to decide there is a better approach to health care than just pouring money into trying to treat sick people. It might be that we ought to put a greater level of focus on keeping people from getting sick in the first place."

As health care reform comes up for Congressional review, please ask your representative that it focus on prevention. Bring attention to prevention by participating in the conversation. Ask your doctor, bring it up in conversations with your family and friends, "what can I do, what are you doing to prevent chronic disease in the first place?"

In the spirit of prevention, I am offering to be in my office at no charge on Wednesday nights throughout the month of March from 5-6 pm to answer your questions and help guide you in your eating. Please RSVP to the number below as I will email you a home assignment to bring in with you. It will help me help you. I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity.

Lynn Mayer is a Certified Nutrition Consultant and Health Coach here in Telluride, Colorado. Lynn is available for consultation in person, by phone 970 369-4790 or through her website www.thejoyofhealth.com.