



Mike Durbin,
PWD type 2

MY STORY:

"Type 2 diabetes saved my life."

By Mike Durbin, PWD type 2

A yeast infection, a common occurrence among people with diabetes, led me two years ago to see a doctor. The tests that followed revealed that I had type 2 diabetes and congestive heart failure (CHF).

Hard to believe that I'm now a 27-year-old guy with type 2 diabetes and CHF. Neither condition is visible to others.

At diagnosis of type 2 diabetes, my A1C was 9.6 percent and my fasting blood glucose was in the 200 mg/dl range—both well above acceptable. That news didn't really come as a shock, but the news about my heart hit me like a ton of bricks. Hearing that my heart was working at only 30–35 percent of capacity and that there was possibly a blockage in one of my arteries was quite scary.

My father had died of a massive heart attack just seven months before. He was 47; I was 24 at diagnosis and appeared to be headed toward the same fate.

The learning curve

The fact that I was so young was the one thing in my favor, according to my doctors. I had a good chance of turning the

congestive heart failure around, or at least restoring some of my heart's strength. It would take an insane medication regimen, a strict 1,500-calorie diet, some exercise, and a whole lot of determination, but it was the price I would have to pay to live.

Learning as much as I could about both type 2 diabetes and congestive heart failure became something of an obsession. I threw myself headfirst into researching causes, treatment options, meal plans, medications, complications, etc. With the assistance of my primary care doctor, I participated in a diabetes education class at a local hospital. During the class I worked with a certified diabetes educator and a dietitian to create a meal plan I could tolerate. I walked away with a better feeling about the direction I was heading and knowing that there were health professionals I could reach out to.

My support network

The Internet proved to be my best source of information and support. My searching led me to a social network called Diabetic Rockstar (diabeticrockstar.com). I was

Continued on page 22 »

» Continued from page 20

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encouraged by the message on the site’s home page: “Diabetes isn’t a death sentence—life is a death sentence. Stop with the excuses: Start living, or start dying, the choice is yours.” I realized that I had been given a second chance—a chance to live my life to the fullest.

My searching also led me to the diabetes online community (DOC), made up of diabetes social networks and countless diabetes blogs, written by people touched by diabetes (see thediabetesoc.com for a list). While the majority of them focused on type 1 diabetes, a few were about type 2. All of them were valuable. Just knowing there were others who really understood what I was going through made a difference.

In the DOC individuals with all types of diabetes come together to support each other and raise diabetes awareness. I have been blessed with so many awesome friends and talk to many of them every day, especially on Twitter. I consider the DOC an extension of my family.

My own blog


Inspired by reading the experiences of others, I launched my blog, My Diabetic Heart (mydiabeticheart.com), as a way to share my experiences and help myself as I worked to process what was going on in my life. I wanted to show people that while there is no cure for type 2 diabetes and CHF is a permanent part of my life, it is most definitely possible to live a long, fulfilling life with these conditions.

I’ve shared the excitement of lowering my A1C from 9.6 to 6.5 percent and losing 40 pounds within three months of being diagnosed. I have written about celebrating birthdays and holidays and traveling with type 2 and CHF. And more recently I shared the exciting news that the strength of my heart has increased to 50 percent.

I’ve also shared my struggles with the mental health issues that accompany chronic conditions. I had a haunting fear that my heart would give out in the night and I wouldn’t wake up in the morning. Many sleepless nights resulted from that. I’ve made no secret that I’ve battled depression since diagnosis. The stress of day-to-day management, keeping track of the prescription medications, and worrying about how the bills are going to get paid is overwhelming at times.

Life with type 2 diabetes and CHF has been full of highs and lows, heartache and tears, but it has been so much easier knowing there are people who “get it.”

We can no longer afford to think that type 2 diabetes and CHF strike only older generations or that complications are miles down the road. The keys to avoiding them are education, vigilance, and a proactive approach to your own health.

If you’re feeling unwell, go to the doctor. There is no shame in having health problems; the real shame lies in not seeking the help you need to control them before it is too late. That one appointment could save your life. It saved mine. 

Make friends with Mike Durbin, PWD type 2, at his blog, mydiabeticheart.com.