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By MONALISA DAS

Reverse diabetes is a popular term that refers to tackling diabetes by the inclusion of a daily exercise regimen and dietary changes. Here we talk to three people about how they used this concept to bring their sugar levels down

# GETTING OFF THE SUGARY TRACK

CONSIDERING the proverbial sweet tooth of the average Indian, it isn't surprising that the nation has been dubbed the diabetes capital of the world. We have more than 50 million diabetics in the country, estimated to shoot up to 80 million by 2030.

Experts attribute this to rise in obesity that itself is an outcome of wrong eating habits and sedentary lifestyle. A study jointly done by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Max Hospital shows the incidence of obesity and diabetes is increasing at an alarming rate, especially among young urban Indians. Doctors say that an unhealthy lifestyle combined with an increase in the consumption of junk food and alcohol is to blame. Kids seem to be worst hit by this trend as nearly half of the country's 250 million adolescents are obese. "Almost 70 percent of these overweight adolescents are likely to grow into overweight adults, who will be prone to diabetes and other complications arising out of it," says Dr Anoop Misra, director, department of Diabetes & Metabolic Diseases, Fortis Hospital. As more and more people are diagnosed with diabetes, they are likely to get further complications affecting the kidney, heart, blood pressure and liver.

While lifelong medication has been the usual recourse for those with this disease, the expenses involved in the treatment and the grim prognosis can't be ignored. On an average a diabetic spends around Rs 26,000 annually on medication and tests. Also, insulin injections if not taken correctly can prove to be fatal. Excess insulin is not a solution too, as it can cause hypoglycaemia - a condition of too low blood sugar level. At times, low doses of insulin injections

can even lead a diabetic to ketoacidotic coma. Such concerns are promoting both those with the disease as well as experts to look for new, healthier ways of defeating the disease. Most of these involve the creation of a healthy lifestyle.

"Diabetes calls for lifestyle changes. Although most patients need medicines to keep a check on their sugar level, a lot can be done by dietary modifications, regular exercises and stress management," says Dr Vikas Ahluwalia, president, Diabetes Care Foundation of India. We take a peek into some solutions devised by patients to deal with this lifelong disease.

Doctors feel these approaches would in fact reduce the other lifestyle diseases as well that Indians are falling victim to such as cardiovascular problems, fluctuating blood pressure, etc.

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**Blood sugar above 126 mg/dL on fasting and 200 mg/dL at random is a sign of risk**

## KNOW THE TYPE

### TYPE-1

- Happens when the body can't produce insulin, thus raising blood sugar
- Due to genetics or trauma to pancreas in an accident or a surgery
- Mostly appears during teens. Also called juvenile diabetes
- Insulin injections are needed

### TYPE-2

- Happens when the insulin can't move sugar from blood to cells
- Primarily due to obesity and sedentary lifestyle. Could be genetic
- It's the more common type. 70-80 percent cases belong to this type

## APPROACH #2 VEGAN DIET

A BOWL of fresh papaya, bananas, mango, apple and chikoo is what Mumbai based Ashit Sheth has for breakfast these days. While this may pass off as a typical healthy choice for many, this is actually a luxurious treat for this 46-year-old man who has been diabetic for the last six years. "I had always been a fruit lover until I was diagnosed with type-2 diabetes," says Sheth. Multiple doses of diabetic pills became a given, followed by a low carbohydrate, low sugar diet and fruits turned out to be a complete no-no. Despite following such a strict regimen, his sugar level would remain high around 250-350 mg/dL. Recently he turned to a vegan diet that is a whole grain plant based diet, cutting out all animal products including milk, dairy products and cooking oil. He has included whole grains such as jowar, bajra and whole wheat, and seasonal fruits in his diet instead. "I take plant based food products only in their natural form now. This means no white flour and white rice, which are refined versions of wheat and rice respectively. Also I insist on a single grain during a meal and avoid multigrain meals," says Sheth. Within three months,

positive results are visible. While his blood sugar has reduced to 150-170 mg/dL, his dependence on diabetic pills has turned minimal from seven a day to just a half. Also, Sheth has lost some weight and feels more energetic now.

In type-2 diabetes, insulin is unable to move sugar from the blood to the person's cell. This is mainly because of the fats in

**I enjoy eating fruit without any guilt now**

the cells that block insulin from doing its job. As animal products contain fats, the more one consumes them, the more fats are added to the body. "Contrary to the popular notion, there's no harm in eating raw fruits that's natural food. But fruit juice is not good as it's a refined form and doesn't contain essential fibres," says Dr Nandita Shah, homeopathic physician based in Auroville, Tamil Nadu. She advocates the consumption of carbohydrates as well, pro-



vided they are in their raw form. According to her, it's the refined or complex carbohydrate that's the culprit.

**DOCTOR'S TAKE:** "High sugar level is not the cause, rather the result of diabetes. So the aim

should not be to cut out sugar or carbohydrates from the diet. Instead the idea is to reduce fats and animal protein," says Dr Nandita Shah, homeopathic physician.

RAMESH SHARMA

