

Arthur's story of how he beat diabetes

Overcoming scepticism to achieve great results

Arthur, is 65 years old and retired from his job as a bus and coach driver and as a director of his own coach company. He knew the dangers of diabetes all too well, having seen his friend develop the condition at 55 years old and go blind as a result, and then have his leg amputated at roughly the same time as Arthur was told that he was pre diabetic. Sadly this friend died while Arthur was attending the National Diabetes Prevention Programme course.

Arthur was identified as being pre diabetic as part of routine blood testing for diabetes and was asked if he wanted to attend a course and be part of the National Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP). He had been having regular blood tests and was told that the blood sugar readings were becoming higher than perhaps healthy, so even though it wasn't a total surprise, it was still a shock for Arthur to have it confirmed that he was so close to being diabetic.

Arthur's friend and coach driving colleague, was a stark reminder of the dangers of diabetes and Arthur was aware that they had shared the same sedentary lifestyle and eating habits from driving long distances. This proved to be a huge motivation for Arthur to attend the course and he had a strong desire to avoid developing diabetes if he could.

"Seeing diabetes first hand with my friend made me appreciate the risks, but I know someone who had the blood test taken and was offered the course but they declined it. Unfortunately some people don't fully understand just what can happen as a result of having diabetes if they don't do something about their lifestyle."

Attending the course

Arthur was interested in listening to what was being offered, but he was extremely sceptical of the group meeting situation and had imagined people just sat in a circle talking, but it wasn't like that at all. "All credit to the course presentations, they were very informative and funny", said Arthur. "There was plenty of humour and this created a relaxed atmosphere with no pressure and the instructor wasn't prohibitive in telling you what you couldn't do; it was more suggestive and alternatives."

Arthur responded well to this approach and he rearranged things to suit the sessions as he started to see the benefits. After about 3 weeks he was determined to commit to the course and was the only person on his course with 100% attendance and didn't miss a session.

Arthur's wife Carol, was encouraged to attend the course with Arthur, so they could both learn how to alter cooking and eating habits and lifestyle changes. Arthur explained "I couldn't have done it without Carol; it wouldn't have been as effective, as she was really supportive and encouraging throughout all the sessions. "There are major lifestyles changes to make and doing the course together as a team and understanding the advice and implementing it was made easier with her there."

For Arthur the advice and information was unexpected; no negatives and his previous perceptions of having to give up everything he enjoyed were proved wrong. The emphasis

was on providing ideas and examples, plus it was encouraging and easy to listen to and he felt involved and able to ask questions at any time.

Arthur realised that there wasn't the need to cut out, instead he just had to change his choices of those things he ate and drank. "I like to drink lager and it was suggested that I change to drinking something better for me and as a result I've not had a drink of lager since starting the course but I can still enjoy a drink with friends."

Results and Achievements

Arthur started the course in Immingham in November 2016 and completed 10 sessions and his 3 month results showed the fantastic progress he had made. In July Arthur's blood test reading was 45 and after 3 months on the course he had reduced this to 38, which has taken him out of the pre diabetic range. (HbA1C blood test 41 – 47 pre diabetic). He has lost 17lbs in weight in 3 months (91.8kg start down to 85kg) and his BMI was 31.6 and is now 29.4, meaning he is now overweight and no longer classed as obese.

Arthur now has the incentive to keep going and has set his own individual goals he wants to achieve in terms of lowering his blood readings, weight and BMI and he will be able to see his progress after 6 months and at the end of the course. He is really pleased with lowering his blood sugar levels and the weight loss he's achieved. "My clothes are no longer tight and it could mean a new wardrobe, but I do feel a lot better for having lost the weight and the changes I've made and I want to reduce my risks even further and lose another half a stone."

Lessons learnt and Lifestyle Changes

Arthur has learnt to make different choices and change his lifestyle particularly dietary and how to incorporate more daily exercise into his life. Walking simple distances where he would have previously driven in the car and being active during the adverts whilst watching tv by climbing the stairs or doing his regular stretching and strengthening exercises. He's recently become a Grandad and his daughter lives at the other end of the village, so he enjoys walking to visit his new grandson.

No more white bread or breakfast cereals for Arthur, and his wife Carol, has a new love of cooking with coconut oil. Arthur explained "As there are tastier alternatives I don't feel like I've given anything up. I can still eat and drink and enjoy myself with the family and it doesn't spoil any of my progress and a real positive was managing to get through Christmas and I didn't put any weight on."

Arthur thoroughly enjoyed his 65th birthday celebrations and overcame the challenge of a special family occasion and holiday, and realised that he can still enjoy these times and remain free of diabetes and the risks. Arthur and Carol's love of eating out and socialising hasn't had to change.

Biggest Challenge

Arthur freely admitted he has a big sweet tooth and thought that giving up sweets and biscuits would be the biggest challenge for him, but surprisingly he found it a lot easier than he thought and no longer has a sweet/biscuit tin. He's not eaten sweets since he started the

course and he doesn't think about them or miss them, making it the first Christmas without a tin of Quality Street chocolates!

His love of potatoes has been Arthur's biggest challenge and reducing the amount he ate significantly proved to be the toughest choice for Arthur. "Some changes were certainly easier to make than others. I love my potatoes and it's something I miss eating in the way I used to, but I stick with it and it's the one remaining struggle, but keeping my risk of diabetes at bay makes me eat small amounts."

Arthur has a much more focused and positive attitude towards his own health. The course has increased his awareness of what he is eating and doing and he's keen to get his blood tested and monitor his progress and know that he's living well and lowering his risk of diabetes. Carol is really impressed that he has been so determined and she is proud of what he has achieved and the way he's approached the changes that he's had to make.

Thoughts about the National Diabetes Prevention Programme

"The course is excellent and if they can get sceptical people like me onto the course and make them change their lifestyles it's a great programme and will save lives and money in not having to treat diabetes in the long term. You've just got to get people committing to the 9 months, as it sounds rather daunting at first but once you get past this then the benefits far outweigh the effort required."

"I am retired now and have more time to think about and prepare my meals and do the much needed exercise and can see it would be harder for people working. I put up my own barriers to the course and would encourage others to be open to learning about the dangers of diabetes and improving their health and commit to the course and take the offer of help and support because if someone wants to avoid becoming diabetic then this is their opportunity."

When asked what he would say to someone who is at risk or thinks they are at risk of diabetes, Arthur said, "I would certainly recommend the course to others and encourage people to do it, and would say to them that if they are offered the course then take it without hesitation and if not offered the course and you think you're at risk then seek it out."

Arthur hopes it will be a course offered to more people and will be available in the long term as he's benefited from it and he now has the knowledge of what he needs to do to make sure that he is fit and healthy and lowering his risk of diabetes and he feels that other people should have the same opportunity.