

Cally's story of how she beat Type 2 diabetes

Determined not to be beaten by diabetes

Cally is 49 years old and in 2009 she swapped life in London for a different pace of life in Grimsby with her husband and dog Charley. Following an incident, she developed a fear and a serious knock in confidence and she didn't venture out of the house alone and began to lead a very sedentary lifestyle. In addition to this Cally, tackled her drinking problem and stopped drinking alcohol and began to eat whatever she fancied and her body swapped one sugar for another, and with daily sweet treats her weight increased from 77 kg to over 100kg.

Cally was identified as being at risk of diabetes after having blood tests for headaches she was experiencing and as her levels were high, she was invited to join the programme. She had her induction with the National Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP) in September 2016 and started the course in Grimsby in November 2016.

She was already aware of diabetes as her dad was diabetic, and explained, "Strangely I wasn't freaked by the thought of diabetes, as my dad was diabetic, and was diagnosed as he was overweight, and his drinking and diet was appalling. He was stubborn and wouldn't take medication and told the nurse he would lose weight and change his diet and he lost 3 stone over 6 months (walking 3 miles a day) and cutting down the sugar in his diet."

Being fully aware that she was overweight at 102kg despite being tall, with a BMI of 31, Cally wanted to lose weight and jumped at the chance of going on the programme that would help her achieve this. "I know I do best if I set myself targets and I understood that if I could change my lifestyle and my body shape, as I had a 44in waist, then I knew that I had a good chance of stopping diabetes."

Eager to join the prevention programme

At the programme induction Cally was tested and a blood sample taken for hbA1c and it was found that she was in fact now a diabetic with a reading of 51.7. She was told that this might cause a problem as the programme was aimed at people with pre diabetes and she may not be accepted onto a course. Understandably Cally was disappointed, as she had learnt about eating low carb, high fat and really wanted to join the course and address her diabetes and health risk.

After an anxious wait, Cally was accepted onto the group and by this time she had already decided to change her diet and had done her research into diabetes and low carbs and given up eating, bread, pasta, rice, and potatoes and reduced her sugar intake, "those Cadburys Boost bars, Walkers cheese and onion crisps and scones ☹ were gone," explains Cally.

Her husband Andy joined in with the new eating habits, and as Cally points out he didn't have a lot of choice as she loves to cook and is always experimenting in the kitchen and diabetes had become her project. She learnt about carb substitutes such as cauli rocks and having cream in her coffee instead of milk and enjoying berries and yoghurt and other tasty food.

Cally's husband has since been diagnosed as pre-diabetic and invited onto the programme, unfortunately workwise he's not able to attend a course, but he's already made fantastic progress with joining and supporting Cally and he's lost over a stone, and dropped a trouser size.

Cally had conducted a lot of her own research but felt that the course content was well considered and the presentation was excellent. She thought the instructor was very supportive to the group and he recognised their individual needs and got them to invest both personally and as a team. She said, "I think that this was one of the reasons why our group were successful as he cared and we've been lucky to have a fabulous Programme team here in Lincolnshire."

"The important thing I have learnt from the course is that this diabetes prevention programme is different from other diets like Weightwatchers or Slimming World and that I am in control of my own destiny. I know the dangers of diabetes, and have been given the tools to help me live life from here onwards without worrying about the condition."

Results and Achievements

Cally's challenge was a slightly different one following the news that she had diabetes with her high blood test reading of 57.1 however she has achieved amazing results and after 3 months on the National Diabetes Prevention Programme course she had reduced her blood reading to 39, which means she is no longer diabetic and has even taken herself out of the pre diabetic range (HbA1C blood test 41 – 47 pre diabetic).

Cally had lost 6.8kg before starting the course (from 102kg - 95.2 kg) from just being aware she was probably at risk and starting to alter her diet and then after 3 months on the course she had lost a further 23kg (Over 55 cans of Baked beans - reduced sugar of course) and had reduced her BMI from 31 to 24, which means she is no longer obese and at high risk.

These results have given Cally a thinner waist and a positive outlook for continuing her lifestyle changes. She is pleased to have dropped from a size 20 to a size 14 – 16 and explained, "I've lost over 3 and half stones, 10 inches off my waist, and I'm no longer obese. I'm fitter, happier, more confident and I feel I have control over what I eat again."

"I think this programme is marvellous. It's a strong message, but the major problem it faces is undoing generations of dietary thinking. I've heard people saying it's just another fad and arguing that the diet can't work and that cholesterol will go up. It's tough to undo this thinking, but I think we've got to start somewhere. I feel incredible lucky to have had this message presented to me now, as this programme has turned my life around."

Lessons Learnt and Lifestyle Changes

Cally appreciates that she needs to stay active and her biggest challenge through the programme was overcoming the mental barriers that were created from her past and changing her activity levels. Despite this struggle, her lifestyle has changed quite significantly in terms of her diet and she has made the effort and now does much more exercise than she did previously.

"My fitness has improved, I'm braver, though still don't like walking outside the front door, but force myself as I know I have to do it. I go out walking with Charley and I now go out 5 or 6 times a week and go further than I ever would have thought and can be out for nearly 2 hours and walk over 4 miles."

Cally likes the idea of eating a fry up without toast and not feeling guilty, but she does confess to missing the treats and her toast in the morning, but she knows she has to make the changes and maintain them in the long term for the benefit of her health. For her 50th

birthday Cally has set herself the personal goal of getting on a horse, nearly 20 years since she rode and she knew that she had to lose weight and improve her fitness so she can enjoy the ride when it happens. "It was always good for me to have a goal, but as the course leader explained, this programme is designed to help us make long term life changes and choices."

"We know that we will be faced with barriers and Christmas was a challenge for some in the group but we now have the knowledge to help us make decisions to help us. I know the test will really be determined by my attitude and my approach to my health in 5 years, but I've not had a drink in 4 years and I'm enjoying the food I eat and I'm looking to consolidate where I am now and live life with a degree of joy, knowing I've found a happy balance with food and activity."

Cally has been so enthused by the programme and what it has done for her that she has spread the word and raised awareness of diabetes and how it can be prevented with as many people who will listen. She has so far influenced her husband, who has been told he's pre diabetic, her mum, who has cut her intake of carbs and her next door neighbour who was concerned over her health and risk of developing diabetes.

Cally would recommend the National Diabetes Prevention Programme to people and she feels extremely lucky to have been accepted onto the course. She feels that nationally diabetes has the potential to become a bigger problem and people need to take responsibility for themselves and make the tough decisions. "If changing diet and lifestyle was so easy we'd all just do it happily, but seeing the evidence of success that others achieve helps people make up their own minds and my neighbour has seen my success and wants the same."

"The message is all the more powerful when it's delivered by someone who's passionate about the subject, and we are very lucky in Lincolnshire to have a great team running the courses."