



Type 1 diabetes - a long-term condition

Type 1 diabetes: Sam's story

SAM

My name's Sam Williamson. I'm 22 years old. I've just graduated from university last June. I have been diabetic since the age of 11, and I am insulin-dependent. I currently take injections five times a day. I was diagnosed when my Mum read something about the symptoms and signs of diabetes in a magazine, and then I started drinking more and needing to go to the toilet more at school. I started falling asleep really early, was more grumpy than usual, things like that, so she then took me down to the doctor's surgery and they did one quick blood test, and that was it.

My daily routine is a bit different to someone without diabetes. I have to wake up, do a blood test, have some insulin for my food. I can't really miss breakfast, so you have to make sure, even if I wake up late, I have to make sure I can fit in breakfast, then repeat the process of injecting and blood-testing at lunch and dinner, and then I also have to inject before I go to bed. Depending on how busy my day is, or what I'm doing, sometimes I don't do all the blood tests I'm supposed to, very occasionally I don't do all the insulin I'm supposed to, and I probably could look after myself a bit better, but I'm coming to the age now where I'm trying to do that.

At school, and since really, every time you have to inject or do a blood test you get lots of questions, you get lots of reactions like oh no, that's horrible, look how big that needle is, and it's really not, it's just like a 5mm needle, and for me it's part of everyday life, but they all make a big fuss about it which does get on my nerves a little bit. It almost seems like there's a constant need to justify what you're doing, which makes it harder to let it become part of daily life.

At school it wasn't just my fellow pupils that I had issue with, I also had issues with teachers as well, who you would think were a bit more educated in the area, but they aren't always. I once had a maths teacher who, whilst I had a hypo in class and surreptitiously got some of my Lucozade tablets out to deal with that, he thought I was eating sweets and he sent me to the headmaster, when I protested that I wasn't, so he did get a stern telling-off afterwards.

I think to my parents it's had a huge impact on them. They are very supportive, very caring. I think it has given my Mum a huge thing to worry about, and my Dad as well; however, my

Mum shows it more. Every time since the age of 11 till the age, well till now, you know most times I leave the house I get asked whether I've got the right insulin, whether I've got snacks and Lucozade, and I know it's just them looking after me and caring, but sometimes it does become a bit repetitive.

Whilst I was at university I managed to lock myself out of my house without any insulin. Because of that my blood sugars, they sky-rocketed, I had to spend three days in hospital. It was very apparent that the receptionist thought that I had just been drinking far too much last night and was very drunk. Even when we told her that I was a Type 1 Diabetic she still clearly thought that I was just really, really drunk and had brought it upon myself, and was very sharp and short, not very caring, and I think it was only when I managed to fill up a sick bowl incredibly quickly that she began to think there was actually something wrong with me.

CHARLOTTE, SAM'S GIRLFRIEND

So on the occasion that Sam ended up going to hospital he had to be told to go. He didn't want to go, he thought he had food poisoning or some sort of flu or bug. It was only when I insisted that he went, and I actually had to take him into A&E, and even then when he was there he didn't feel he needed to be there, until obviously the doctors explained the severity of the situation, and actually congratulated me on taking him there. So yeah, he did need to be pressurised, and I think it was a reality check for him that those things can happen in his life, and maybe he needs to take a bit more control.

SAM

So I'm now trying to tailor my insulin intake more to what I eat, so I've now got an App on my iPhone that says exactly how much carbs are in each meal but obviously you then have to every meal that gets set in front of you, you have to tot it up and work out the right amounts of units of insulin, and so it almost makes every meal into a bit of a maths problem.

And today I've come to Green Park in London to run the London 10K. I'm raising money for Diabetes UK. So when I woke up this morning I had a nice slow-release carb breakfast to last me throughout the activity, and I also took a bit less insulin for it so that I'm running a bit high, so that I don't dip down whilst I'm running, so hopefully I should make it to the end without having a hypo.

Okay, so I've just finished the 10K. It took me just over an hour, about 1.05 I think. Because of the amount of sugar used running 10k, and 'cos it's very hot today, it's lost in sweat and things like that, just having a sugary drink to replace some of that 'cos my stomach doesn't really like it can take any food at the moment. Despite the fact that I've got diabetes it doesn't stop me doing these things, it just means that there need to be a few more plans in place, but I can still do them.