

Reggie Collins: Eating right and playing bowls



Diabetes
New Zealand



Four years ago, Reggie Collins took a friend for a diabetes test and discovered that she herself had Type 2 diabetes. After changing to a healthier lifestyle including eating right and playing bowls, Reggie now uses herself as a model to show others with diabetes what they can achieve.

From Taumarunui in the King Country and of Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tuwharetoa and Ngāti Raukawa ki te tonga descent, Reggie now lives in Blenheim.

‘When I was diagnosed, I realised I had to change my lifestyle away from the beer and bad foods. I didn’t want to be a diabetes statistic and so decided to do things properly. Two things I had to do were to lose weight and throw away the smoking.’

Reggie’s weight problems began after she busted her knee playing rugby. ‘I used to play basketball, rugby and hockey in winter and softball, tennis and swimming in summer. After my knee injury I got depressed as I couldn’t play my sport.’

‘I love patchwork and quilting and got involved with that which brought back my sanity. But I think physical activity is the most important thing for managing your diabetes.’

A friend recommended playing bowls to Reggie and she has now played for four years at the Blenheim Working Men’s Club. ‘I thought “I’m not playing that, as it’s an old people’s game”. But you have to take the first step and in the end I was going to every game. I played at the Māori tournament in Christchurch in February which was a wonderful experience.’

Reggie works in Rongoa Māori at Te Rapuora O Te Waiharakeke Trust, a Kaupapa Māori Health Service promoting whānau wellbeing.

Rongoa Māori is Māori traditional healing including rongoa rakau (herbal remedies), mirimiri (physical therapies including massage) and karakia (prayer).

‘We make ointments, moisturisers, soaps and oils and I do massage for both Māori and non-Māori including people with diabetes. We really emphasise being smokefree as a key to leading a healthy lifestyle.’

‘Rongoa Māori has helped me to have a healthier diet. My husband Paul also plays a big part as he cooks all my meals. He often has my tea ready when I get home and that stops me picking at the bad stuff. We have soup, meat and potatoes and I love my greens and fruit. I have small meals through the day rather than three big meals.’

Reggie has now lost weight and uses her ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos to show others with diabetes what they can achieve. ‘I say “this is what happens when you don’t do what you’re told”. They can’t believe it’s the same person.’

Sticking to what your doctor or nurse tells you to do is Reggie’s message for others with diabetes. ‘Put in a routine to take your medication and then follow it. But most of all, just do some physical activity. Start at ten minutes a day and work yourselves up.’

‘I didn’t like taking advice but it has saved me from going on to dialysis. Take control of where you want to go and set out to get there. There’s plenty of support out there. Just ask your Māori health provider for help.’