

Chris Precey: The more you know about diabetes, the better your health



Diabetes
New Zealand

As an active member of our diabetes community, Chris Precey believes the more you know about diabetes, the better you can manage your blood glucose levels. Consequently, you will have a lower chance of getting long term complications of diabetes.

Secretary of Diabetes Kapiti Coast for 10 years, treasurer for one year, delegate to regional meetings and the Diabetes New Zealand AGM and Conference for 10 years, Diabetes Information Centre Manager for Kapiti: Chris's experience of the issues people with diabetes face is extensive.

Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in 1988, Chris has had no diabetes complications. 'Finding out everything I could about diabetes, especially how it affected me personally, and keeping up-to-date with diabetes care and developments has helped me manage my diabetes and keep my blood glucose levels within my target range as much as possible.'

Coping with shift work and adjusting from two insulin injections a day to multiple daily injections are two of the challenges Chris has faced. 'Support from my wife, Jan, and advice, encouragement and constructive criticism from my diabetes nurse educator, certified pump technician and dietitian have all been important to me.'

Chris has travelled overseas, with a two month trip being the longest, and plays competitive petanque which helps to lower his blood glucose tremendously.

Managing blood glucose levels reduces the risk of developing diabetes complications such as gum disease. Almost 30 percent of people with diabetes have severe gum disease. Smoking makes this problem worse.

After smoking for 42 years, Chris gave up in 1987, one year before he was diagnosed. 'None of the recognised methods worked for me so I devised my own. It took 20 months to wean myself off cigarettes. Jan's support certainly helped me to overcome this habit.'

Chris checks a nutrition information panel



Photo: Kapiti Observer

As well as reducing the risk of gum disease, Chris found there were other positive benefits to giving up smoking.

'The first thing I noticed was the amount of money I had in my pocket. My clothes stopped smelling of smoke and my food had a lot more taste. If you cannot give up with one method, try other ways and, above all, do not give up trying.'

'Other steps to take to keep your gums and teeth healthy are to look after your teeth by brushing and flossing, listen to your dentist and dental hygienist and follow their advice, and have dental check-ups every six to 12 months.'

This year, Chris was instrumental in appointing a Field Officer for Diabetes Kapiti Coast. 'Our Field Officer keeps in touch with members, is developing a contact regime for new members who are mostly newly diagnosed, and is building relationships with practice nurses. All with the aim of providing support and helping with the retention of members.'

'You'll gain a lot of knowledge by being a member of your local diabetes society. Over the last 10 years, I've found that many people who do not belong are not keeping up-to-date with their diabetes treatment. Being a member will help you stay healthy.'