



Diabetes
New Zealand

Team Jabbers take on Taupo

A team of cyclists and support crew with Type 1 diabetes had a major goal in 2005: to complete the Taupo Cycle challenge on 26 November. The Team Jabbers share their thoughts on cycling the 160km distance and give some hints on controlling blood glucose levels.

Team statistics

- All with Type 1 diabetes
- One first-timer for the challenge
- One national representative in cycling
- Three did 160km solo efforts
- Three in a relay team, one did 80km, the other two did 40km each
- Two support crew from the Oceania team; also with Type 1 diabetes
- Four pump users (including two support people)
- Four pen users
- Five from Wellington (including one support person)
- Three from Auckland (including one support person)

Lorisa Perebooms

- Wellington, diagnosed August 1995
- Benefits I get from cycling: enjoyment, fitness, competitive outlet, friendship, good blood glucose control
- Hints to keep blood glucose down: when first starting out, test, test, test, so you gain a picture of what is happening to your sugar levels before, during and after.

Adjust your insulin accordingly in relation to the food you consume and monitor for any increases in sugar levels. Testing gives you the confidence to do these endurance races because you have the knowledge of how your body is likely to react.

And remember it's always important to carry glucose, muesli bars and your mobile phone because you never know what could happen.

- On completing the challenge: completing such a distance for the first time for me was an accomplishment in itself. Diabetes is just another aspect to take into consideration when preparing for something like this.

- With common sense and planning, nothing is impossible. I felt on a high because I had completed a goal and I started and finished the race with 'perfect' sugar levels and no hypos in between. Having an insulin pump made planning easier.



Team Jabbers after meeting their goal
Back: Jason Hooper, Hamish Norton, Matt Taylor, Jamie Bate, Matt Minor. Front: Loren Barendregt, Lorisa Perebooms.

Jason Hooper

- Age 35, Wellington, diagnosed July 2001
- Benefits I get from cycling: weight loss, increased energy, better control of my blood glucose and a real sense of achievement
- Hints to keep blood glucose down: I have one small muesli bar (30g) before I start and then one muesli bar every hour. I mix 25% Powerade to my water and this keeps me from going too low between muesli bars. I also have a stash of jelly beans on hand if I need a boost.
- On completing the challenge: I was very happy, completing the ride in just under 6 hours. I kept my energy levels up and avoided hypos. I started on 14mmol and finished at around 5mmol.

I did suffer a couple of low glucose moments that evening. This reinforced the advice to test more often especially after prolonged exercise which can cause blood glucose to drop unexpectedly.

Loren Barendregt

- Wellington, diagnosed December 2003
- Benefits I get from cycling: improves blood glucose control, makes me feel better, increased energy levels. Getting out in the fresh air and having fun with friends.
- Keeping my blood glucose under control: I test before and after exercise and eat regularly during exercise usually every hour. I always have jelly beans in my pocket.
- On completing the challenge: the most memorable part was getting to the top of Hatepe Hill. After that I knew there was not stopping me and that I would make it to the finish line.

Second to that would have been the temperature on the day; it was very cold! After I completed the ride I felt relieved, elated and shattered. It was an amazing experience and one I won't forget in a hurry.

Matt Minor

- Age 31, Auckland, diagnosed November 1992
- Benefits I get from cycling: keeps me reasonably fit
- Keeping my blood glucose under control: I start with a banana before I go out and take regular sips of Replace (or a similar drink such as Powerade) on a ride to ensure I stay around the 5-8 mark.

This is in contrast to soccer where if I start a match with high glucose levels (10-12), I have little chance of getting them to reduce without using insulin. This may be something to do with short bursts of activity compared to constant activity on the bike. I know cyclists doing sprints have a similar problem.

- On completing the challenge: for me it was a physical challenge rather than a diabetic one. I really enjoyed the race itself and exceeded my expectations of what I might achieve.

Afterwards my sugars were spot on, so it proved that by taking regular fluid and a muesli bar on board that my guesstimates for what I would need to maintain my sugars were good. I can't wait till next year.

Jamie Bate

- Age 28, Auckland, diagnosed at age 11
- Benefits I get from cycling: feeling fit and healthy, a good mental break from work. It gives me a good understanding of how my body and diabetes react and therefore gives me a lot more freedom and confidence when in new situations as to what to expect.
- Keeping my blood glucose under control: if it's a long ride, I typically drop my basal by about 30% while exercising, and eat and drink on the bike. This holds my sugars stable. If it's short intense training e.g. at the track, then I test between efforts and just closely monitor my blood sugars.

Intense workouts often increase my blood sugars so I will bolus to keep them down and then keep testing afterwards and make sure that I eat enough and not have any hypos. A lot of it has been trial and error with what foods suit me and when I need food and when I don't.

- On completing the challenge: it showed that with persistence and building up knowledge about how your body reacts to exercise, it can become quite easy to keep on top of your diabetes and just enjoy the event. My insulin pump helped immensely. Wouldn't it be nice if there were subsidies for them?

Matt Taylor

- On completing the challenge: I found the event to be an uplifting, exhilarating and inspirational experience. I count myself fortunate to have participated in a team comprised of fellow Type 1's. I'm immensely grateful to our team organisers and our various sponsors who made it all possible.

The team says a huge thank you to Novo Nordisk, their major sponsor.

Also a special thank you to Medica Pacifica and Abbott for their contributions and to Hamish Norton and Damian Wiseman from the Oceania team as the support crew.

Check out www.hypoactive.org - an Australian site dedicated to people with diabetes who are active in sports.