



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# **Myths and Truths about Diabetes...Coyote's Trickery or Eagle's Wisdom?**

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Topic: Diabetes Management and Care

UBC Learning Circle – May 2014



## Eagle and Coyote



- Teacher of balance, vision and courage
- Symbol of strength and wisdom
- Inspires of to strive for balance



- Tricksters, cannot be trusted
- Tell jokes and lies
- Can deceive us or sometimes have important lessons to learn



## You have a 'touch' of diabetes...

- If someone says:
  - You have a 'touch' of diabetes
  - You have 'borderline' diabetes
- Who is speaking?





- Myth!!

- Having borderline diabetes is like being borderline pregnant – it is not possible!
- These terms mean blood sugars are too high, and high blood sugars are harmful (even in the early stages)
- Pre-diabetes – Stage 1 Diabetes - Blood sugars high enough to place a person at increased risk for developing diabetes or its complications
- When a person has high blood sugars, it is important to DO something about it – act quickly and aggressively





## Getting diabetes is your fault...

- If you have ever heard someone say that it is your own fault that you have diabetes because:
  - You ate too many sweets or sugary foods
  - You are too overweight or are too lazy
  - You are being punished for bad behaviour





- Myth!!
  - Getting diabetes is NOT your fault
  - Diabetes is not a character flaw
- Through science and understanding, we have come to realize that:
  - The majority of people in North America and world wide eat the same way
  - Most people get less exercise than their ancestors
- Diabetes is Genetics + Environment (Like the gun + the bullet)





## Screening for Diabetes in High Risk Groups

- The early we can detect diabetes, the better the long-term quality of life a person will have
- Every First Nations person with 1 additional risk factor
  - Screening at least every 1-2 years
- Every pregnant First Nations woman
  - Screening as soon as pregnancy is detected
  - Screen again at 24-28 weeks
  - Post-partum follow up – 6 weeks to 6 months and every 1-2 years





## You should accept the fact that you have diabetes...

- If someone says that you should accept diabetes without being:
  - Angry about it
  - Sad or depressed
  - Frustrated when things are challenging
  - Overwhelmed







- Myth!!
  - Diabetes is a burden and is a lot of hard work
  - Creator doesn't take away all your other problems when he gives you diabetes
  - It is ok to feel sad or angry. Talk to an elder, family member or health care provider about it





## Truths about diabetes and feelings

- Depression is common in people with diabetes
  - Depression is feeling sad, hopeless, tired, unmotivated, guilty, worthless, lacking concentration or possibly thoughts of suicide
  - You may be depressed if you regularly experience a few of these symptoms
  - Talk to your elders, health workers and nurses to make a plan for managing depression



Diabetes should not be a barrier to living the life you want...

- You can have a family
- Find balance
- Live a long healthy life





- Truth!
- People with diabetes can:
  - Follow their dreams
  - Live a long life
- Yes diabetes is hard, but dreams are important. You don't have to give up your dreams because of diabetes.
- Be stronger than diabetes, don't let it beat you up!



You don't have to worry about diabetes unless you feel sick...

- If someone says that you don't have to worry about your blood sugars or managing your diabetes because:
  - You don't feel sick
  - You have other things to worry about in life, like working and/or taking care of your family





- Myth!!
  - You can't always feel when your blood sugars are high
  - High blood sugars cause thick blood and leads to damage
  - You can't manage diabetes by how you feel, you need to manage it by knowing your numbers





Having perfect blood sugar at all times is not possible...





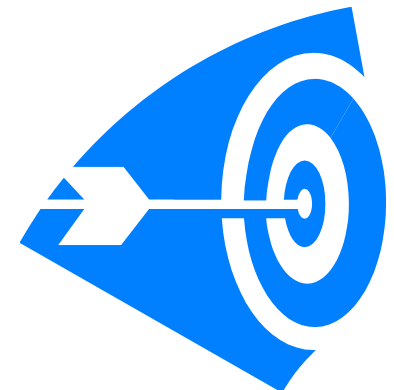
- Truth!!
  - Perfect blood sugars are simply not possible with today's tools
  - You don't need perfect blood sugar all the time to stay healthy, but you do need 'good enough' blood sugar
  - Have your Hemoglobin A1c (measure of your average blood sugar) tested
    - 'Good enough' blood sugars usually produce an A1c of 7% or less, which is the # you are aiming for





## Healthy blood sugar goals

- Targets are something you are aiming for – it's not hit or miss. You get points for coming close!!
- Hemoglobin A1c = 7% or less (6.5% is desirable for some people or 7.1 – 8.5% for others)
- Blood sugars
  - Before eating = Less than 6
  - 1 hour after eating = Less than 9 mmol
  - 2 hours after eating = Less than 8 mmol





People with diabetes have to follow a 'diabetic diet'...





- Myth!!
  - Every person – regardless of whether or not they have diabetes, will be stronger, healthier, and more balanced when they are eating good healthy food
  - The difference is a person with diabetes needs to understand how the foods they eat affect their blood sugar





## Food and Diabetes

- Diets don't work, diabetes lasts a lifetime
- Good nutrition is vital for everyone
- Most people are willing to change, but unwilling to BE changed
- You don't need to use 'sugar-free' foods
- Skills power produces better results than willpower
- Portion size is important



## Diet vs. Ways of eating

- The best 'diet' for an individual with diabetes is the one that provides optimal health, can be enjoyed for a lifetime, incorporates cultural practices and traditional foods, and honours individual choice and preferences





## Being overweight means you are not healthy...

- If someone says that heavy people:
  - Should lose weight before they can properly control their blood sugar
  - Cannot be healthy
  - Are lazy, eat too much, or lack willpower to change





- Myth!!
  - Blood sugar can be controlled at any weight using a variety of tools
  - Losing a small amount of weight can help control blood sugar in people who have insulin resistance... big weight loss is not necessary.
  - Don't try to lose weight before attempting to get your diabetes under control – focus on control first



## Facts about body weight

- People come in different shapes and sizes
- We accept that dogs come in many different shapes and sizes and we should do the same for people
- Health at Every Size ... is based on the simple premise that the best way to improve health is to honour your body. It supports people in adopting health habits for the sake of health and well-being (rather than weight control).
- Health at Every Size encourages:
  - *Accepting and respecting the natural diversity of body sizes and shapes.*
  - *Eating in a flexible manner that values pleasure and honors internal cues of hunger, satiety, and appetite.*
  - *Finding the joy in moving one's body and becoming more physically vital.*





Taking more pills is a sign that your diabetes is worse...

- Who is speaking?

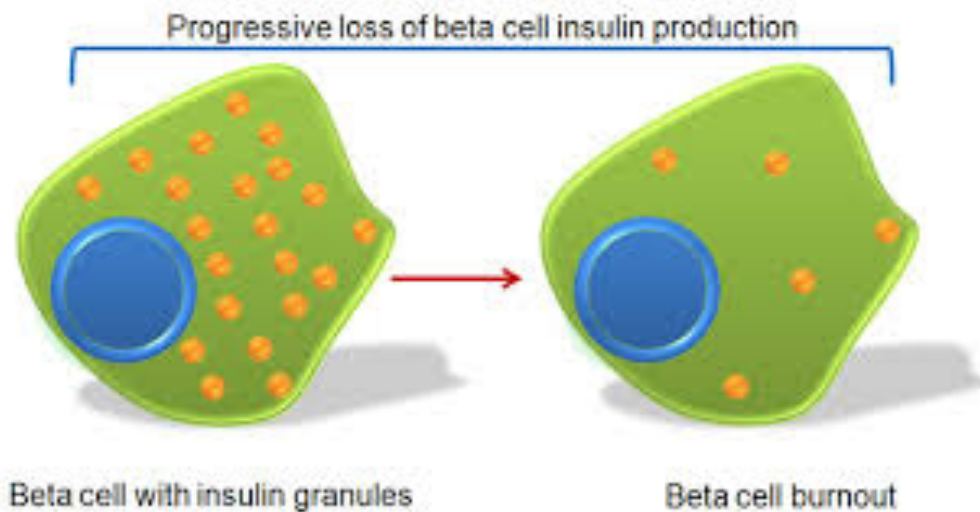
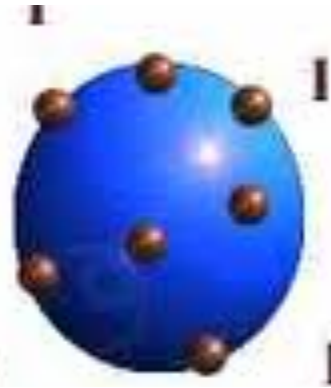
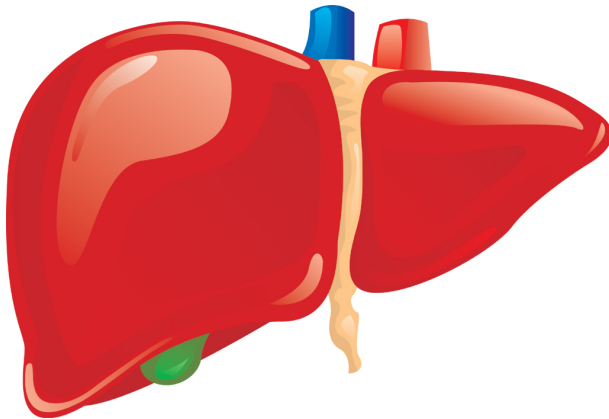




- Myth!!
  - When you have type 2 diabetes, taking more pills is often a sign that you have had good care for your diabetes or have more tools for managing your blood sugars
  - If the pills you are taking aren't improving things, then you and your team should try something different
  - Over time, good therapy usually requires adding more pills or bigger doses of pills to manage blood sugars

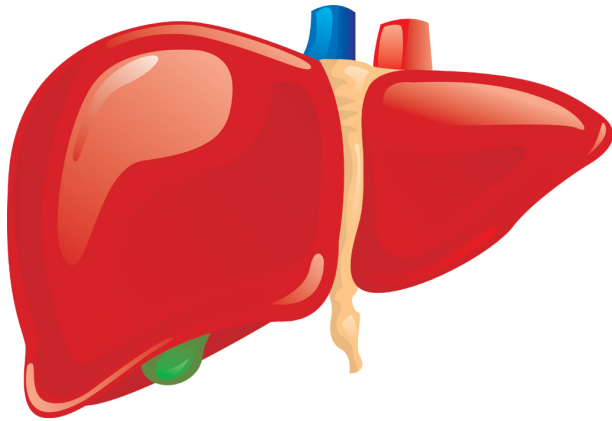


## Type 2 Diabetes – What causes high blood sugars?





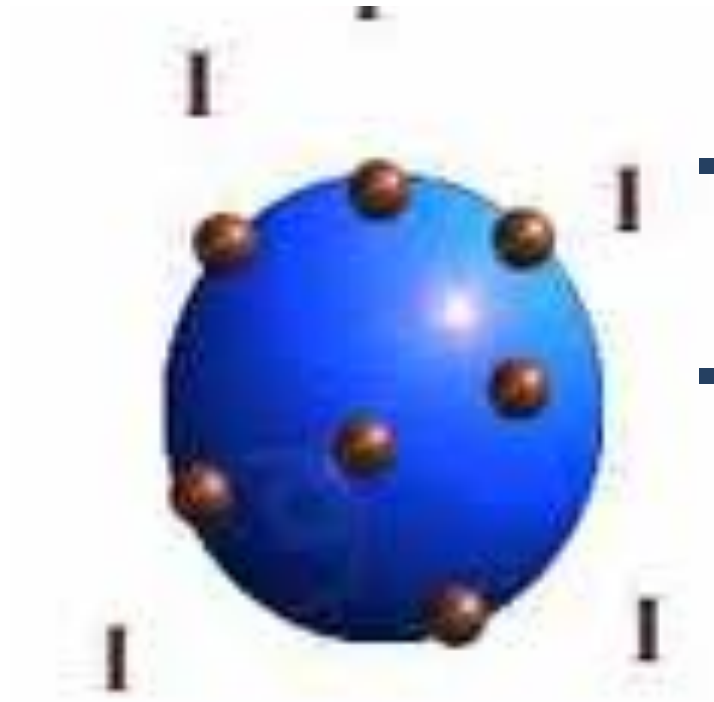
## Type 2 Diabetes – Medications



- Problem
  - Extra sugar from the liver
- Medication
  - Metformin (Glucophage)



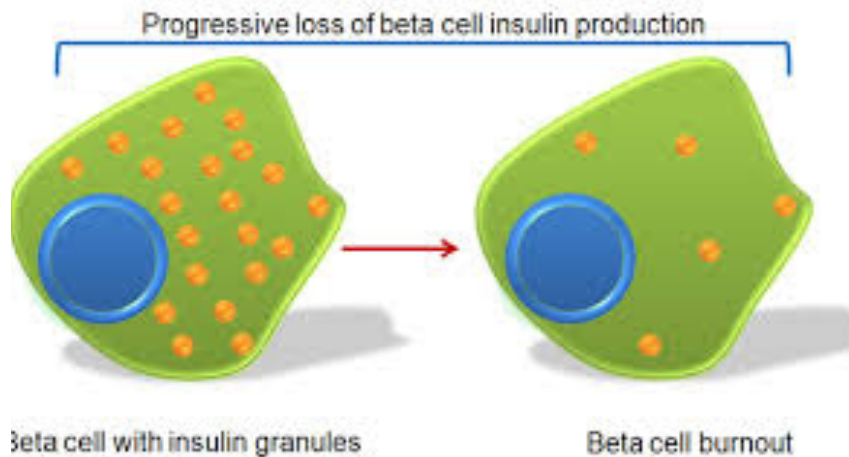
## Type 2 Diabetes - Medications



- Problem
  - Insulin resistance
- Medication
  - Actos (Pioglitazone)
  - Avandia (Rosiglitazone)



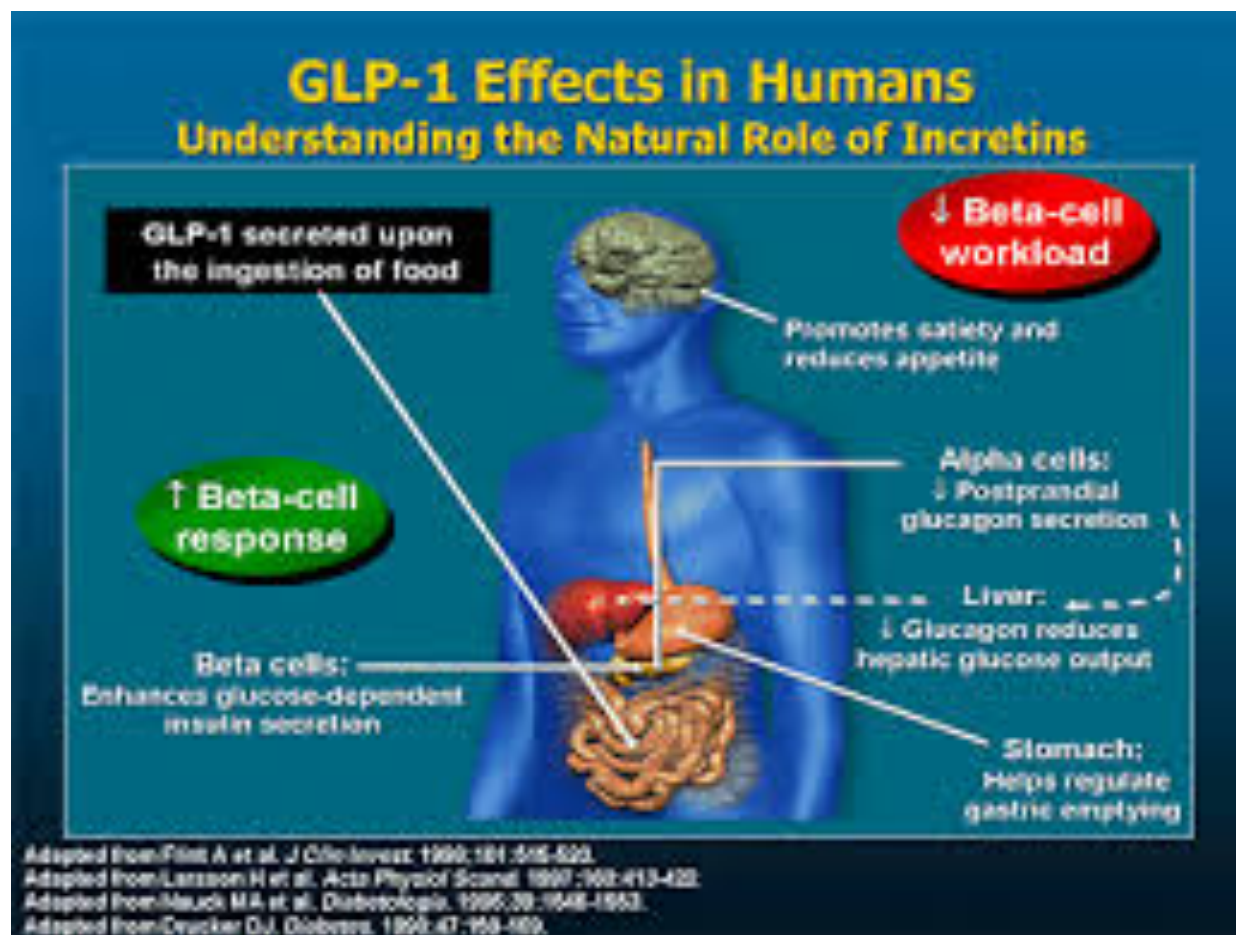
## Type 2 Diabetes - Medications



- Problem
  - Relative Lack of Insulin
- Medication
  - Meglitinides
    - Gluconorm, Starlix
  - Sulfonylureas
    - Diabeta (Glyburide)
    - Diamicron (Gliclazide)
    - Amaryl (Glimepiride)
  - Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors
    - Glucobay (acarbose)



## One final problem with more science



- Incretins
- ↑ GLP-1 Levels
  - Byetta, Victoza
- ↓ DPP-4
  - Januvia, Tradjenta, Onglyza





## Incorporating Traditional Medicines

- Can I balance western medicines and traditional medicines?
  - Talk to an Elder or Traditional Healer
  - Ask a Pharmacist about potential drug interactions
  - Use blood glucose monitoring as an useful tool to check if traditional medicines are working
    - Remember, we don't always feel when blood sugars are high







## People who take insulin have the ‘bad’ kind of diabetes...

- If someone says:
  - “Bad diabetes” is the kind where you take insulin
  - Taking insulin means you have failed
  - Taking insulin leads to kidney problems, dialysis, and amputations



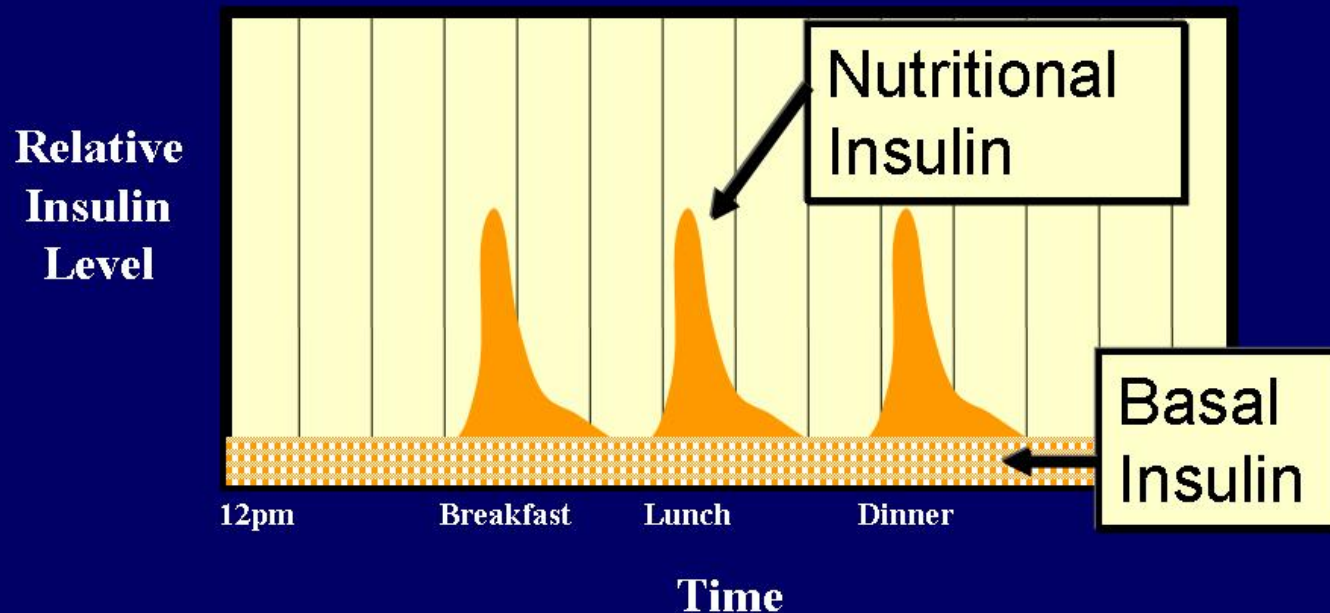


- Myth!!
  - “Bad diabetes” is when diabetes is out of control
  - Insulin should not be used as a threat, insulin should not be seen as a personal failure
  - Most people with type 2 diabetes will eventually need insulin – and not because they did anything wrong
    - Diabetes is a progressive disease
  - Kidney damage and wounds result from uncontrolled blood sugar



## Natural Insulin

### Insulin Regimens



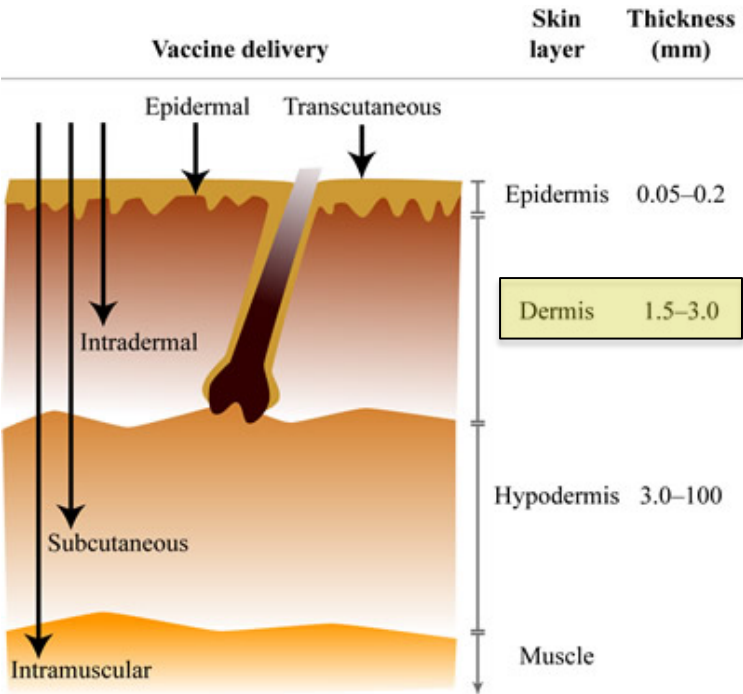


## The Right Insulin

Insulin Type	Onset	Peak	Duration
RA (Rapid Acting)	15 mins	90 minutes	3 hours
R (short acting)	30 mins	3-4 hours	8 hours
NPH (intermediate acting)	1 ½ hours	4-12 hours	22 hours
D (Detemir)	1 hour	2-12 hours (mild)	6-24 hours
G (Glargine)	1 hour	--	24 hours



# The Right Insulin Tools





You need to check your blood sugar regularly...

- Who is speaking?





- Truth!!
  - Every person needs to test in order to get control of their blood sugars or to keep control
  - Monitoring blood sugar is like using the control panel on a car to operate the car
  - Since you are the person with diabetes, the test results belong to you – to help you ‘operate your car’
    - Results are not just for your health provider
    - Use the results to understand your own diabetes
    - At first, don’t change a thing – discovery learning



## Working towards better diabetes care

- What are your rights to better care?
  - To receive care that is not judgement-based
  - To receive care that is not failure-based
  - To not be called the 'ic' word (i.e. diabetic)
  - To be informed of and to choose from all of the tools in the diabetes toolbox







## Remember these wise messages from the Eagle

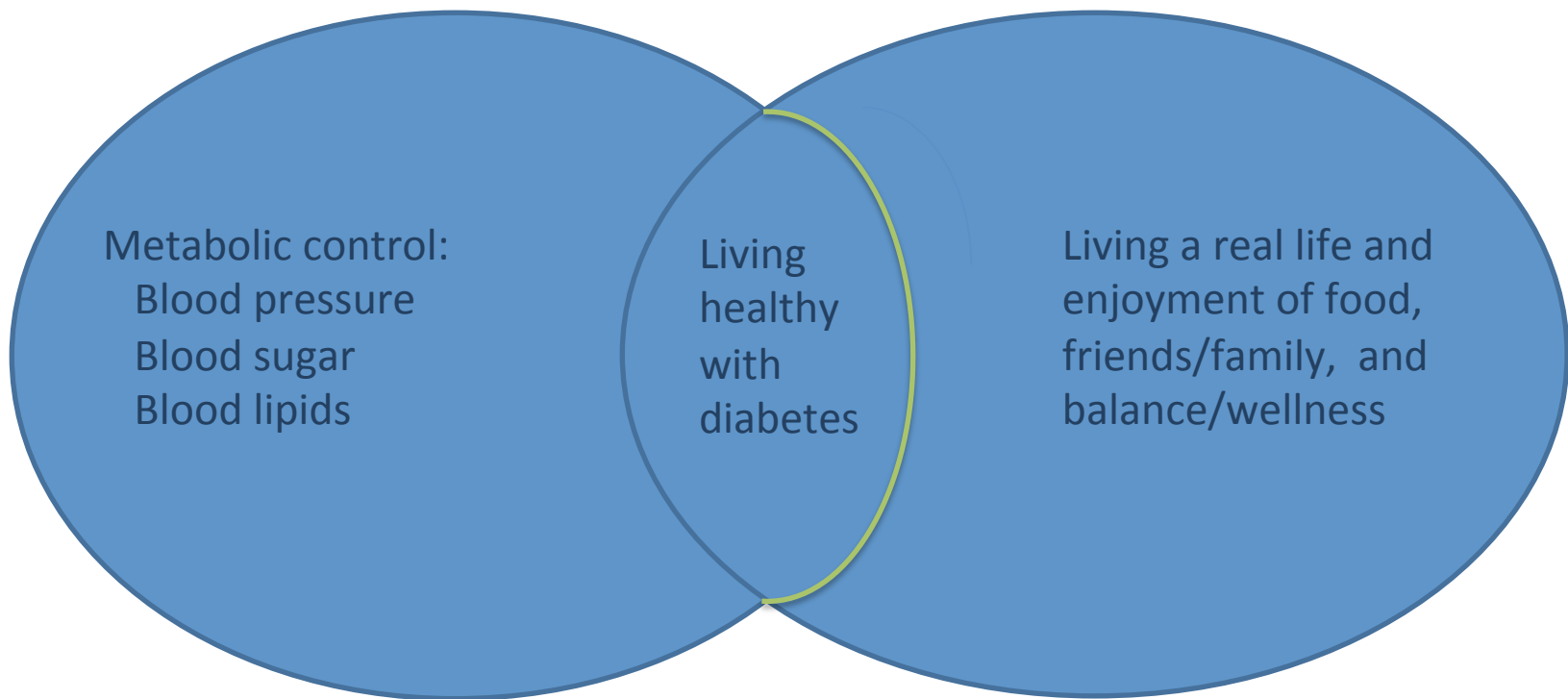
- 1. Diabetes is not a character flaw
- 2. You are the one who controls your diabetes
- 3. Taking care of diabetes is hard work
- 4. Support from others lightens the load
- 5. Control helps protect your health
- 6. You can't control diabetes by how you feel, you must manage it by the numbers
- 7. You can eat sugars just like other carbohydrates, if you learn how to count and manage them
- 8. Being physically active is good for your body and your mind – and its good for your diabetes too
- 9. Regular medical care – even when you don't feel sick – is important to stay healthy with diabetes for a lifetime
- 10. Diabetes control and an enjoyable life are a package deal. You cannot have one without the other.





## Ultimate goal

- Our ultimate goal is to find a balance between:



# Questions & Discussion

Any questions?

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