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Why Diabetics Struggle With Weight Loss

In a perfect world that works. But most diabetics will insist that there is more to it, because when they do the same things as non-diabetics, they get no results, while their non-diabetic friends drop pound after pound. Fad diets do not work, diet products do not work, even exercise shows little or no results. The struggling diabetics are right-- there is more to it than just cutting calories. Diabetes is caused by eating a bad diet, and a good diet is a key part of regaining control. But it is the bad diet that has placed a number of conditions in place that must be understood in order to win the fat war. There are a number of interrelated circumstances that contribute to making diabetic weight loss difficult. First, let's look at how the problem originated, then we can investigate how that information can lead to reversing the problem. Years of bad diet, containing fats, sweets, high glycemic index foods, prepared foods and dairy products caused inflammation. A complete detailed explanation of how inflammation caused diabetes can be found in the "Diabetics Handbook" (see below). The following will be a gross oversimplification, due to space limitations, but hopefully, it will demonstrate the important aspects of the problem. Pro-inflammatory substances (pro-oxidants) are normally used by the body to fight disease and infection (via the immune system).

They play many important roles in the body including digestion, and even breathing. Normally, the body uses antioxidants to control these processes. However, years of bad diet, which is characteristically very low in antioxidants, causes an immune system to lose the ability to shut down. Consequently, the immune system begins to attack healthy cells causing serious damage. In type I diabetes, the beta cells (insulin producing cells) are destroyed. In type II diabetes many cells are damaged setting up a condition known as insulin resistance. Insulin resistance occurs when the body's cells cannot properly communicate when using insulin to uptake and burn glucose. When the body digests food, particularly carbohydrates, it is converted into glucose. Glucose is distributed throughout the body in the bloodstream by the liver. The liver will normally control fat levels. When very high levels of fat are in the bloodstream, due to diet, the liver cannot process it all.

It begins to fill its cells with sacs of triglycerides (converted glucose for storage) and it places the excess in the adipose tissues (belly fat). The brain, vital organs and muscle tissue rely on glucose which provides energy to function. As these organs use glucose, the liver will place more in the bloodstream to replace it. In a perfect world, the organs and tissues would use it efficiently, and hopefully in proportion to the amount produced by food. Insulin resistance reduces the amount of glucose that is absorbed and stored by the organs and muscle tissue. Add to that, the fact that most diabetics lead a sedentary lifestyle, meaning that they get minimal amounts of exercise resulting in much less glucose being burned. When the body is impaired by insulin resistance (type II diabetes), the cells do not use as much glucose. The body senses that glucose levels are building up in the bloodstream, so it instructs the pancreas to release more insulin. The body now has high glucose levels and high insulin levels in the bloodstream. Insulin is a hormone that performs many functions, besides allowing cells to absorb glucose. Insulin will also attempt (vigorously) to remove excess glucose from the bloodstream by placing it in storage as fat.

Once in storage, insulin will block the process of breaking fat down to remove it from storage. Many doctors say that the presence of high levels of insulin in the blood causes unnecessary water retention in the body, which is a factor in weight gain. This is a key aspect of beating diabetic obesity, which means that insulin regulation is very important. Insulin also acts on the brain. It promotes cravings that result in eating more and on the liver to manufacture more fat. The liver removes insulin from the bloodstream, but insulin causes fat to be deposited in the liver which, in turn, prevents the liver from removing insulin from the bloodstream. People with belly fat store too much fat in their livers (fatty liver disease - see below), which prevents the liver from removing insulin. consequently, insulin levels rise higher and higher, which can contribute to heart attacks and more abdominal obesity. Also, fat in the abdominal area functions differently than fat elsewhere in the body, such as the hips. Blood flow from the belly fat goes directly to the liver. The blood flow from other fatty areas, such as the hips, goes into the body's general circulation.

Belly fat has an efficient blood supply and has as more receptors for cortisol (a stress hormone). Cortisol levels vary throughout the day, but will elevate and remain elevated if the body is under stress. High stress and high cortisol levels promote fat deposits in the belly area. It goes to the belly area because there are more cortisol receptors there. Chronically high cortisol levels kill neurons in the brain. They also interfere with neurotransmitters

(such as dopamine and serotonin - the good mood neurotransmitters) which leads to depression and feeling more stressed. Depression is common in diabetics, which adds to the problem since depression causes a stress type reaction in the body. In other words, depression promotes the development of belly fat. The fat that is stored in the adipose tissue (belly fat) is also a characteristic of diabetes. That means that diabetics are genetically prone to belly fat. Belly fat (central obesity) is associated with higher rates of cardiovascular disease, and several types of cancer as well. Heredity plays a role in overall body type (apple vs. a pear shape). Genetics accounts for 25-55 % of the tendency to develop the most serious diseases associated with abdominal fat, the remainder is lifestyle.

As belly fat builds up, it does several things. First, it stops the production of the hormone leptin, which normally would curb appetite. Second, it causes insulin resistance to further increase, which has obvious consequences. The cells use less glucose, the body produces more insulin, and guess what... more fat goes into storage. Fat storage is the body's way of following ancient mechanisms designed to protect the body during lean times. Cave men would sometimes go long periods of time between successful hunting campaigns. So the body learned to take advantage of good times to prepare for the bad times. The body converts glucose into glycogen and triglycerides which are very efficient methods of storing energy.

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