

October 2011 Newsletter



Dr. Hassell with our featured Health Hero Stephan (right) who reversed his type 2 diabetes with help from Providence diabetes educator Susanna Reiner, RN CDE (center) and our book *Good Food, Great Medicine*.

Pow! Man knocks down diabetes!

Overcoming type 2 diabetes requires an aggressive approach. This means vigorously tackling those habits that make it easy for diabetes to sneak up on us. Or even better, knocking down the disease before it gets to us, which is possible if we know the warning signs. For example, alarm bells should go off if you happen to have three or more of the following risk factors, which is a condition called the metabolic syndrome:

1. **high blood pressure** (greater than 135/85 or being treated for high blood pressure),
2. **high triglycerides** (greater than 150mg/dl),
3. **low HDL (“good”) cholesterol** (lower than 40mg/dl),
4. **high blood sugar** (fasting blood sugar greater than 100mg/dl or being treated for high blood sugar), and a
5. **large waistline** (greater than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men; or less for small-framed people).

The metabolic syndrome should not be taken lightly – if you have it, your risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, dementia, and some cancers is substantially increased.

Now meet Stephan, our health hero

Our featured lifestyle hero, Stephan, had an impressive case of metabolic syndrome plus a strong family history of diabetes and heart disease.

He managed to avoid taking these risk factors seriously until one day in early 2010, when complications of his type 2 diabetes blew up into a perfect storm. He drove himself to the closest urgent care, and his numbers turned out to be startling –

- His **triglycerides** were over 6,000 mg/dl. Wow!
- His **random glucose** was almost 1,000 mg/dl.
- His **HbA1c** was 11.5% – normal is 6% or less.
- His **HDL** was 13!

Stephan then followed up with his primary care doctor, who told him that if he didn’t change he would die. He decided to change.



Happily for Stephan, one of his first encounters was with a Providence diabetes educator, Susanna Reiner RN, CDE. She counseled Stephan about the power of a whole-food Mediterranean style diet and exercise to reverse type 2 diabetes, and handed him our book, *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Stephan took it from there.

What happened to Stephan’s diabetes?

After 11 months of hard work, Stephan had fought back from what was essentially a death sentence.

- **Blood pressure?** It became normal *without* the help of medications.
- **Triglycerides?** They dropped to less than 100 mg/dl.
- **His HDL (good) cholesterol?** It *tripled!*
- **His overall cholesterol?** It dropped by 30% *without medication*.
- **His weight?** He lost 60 pounds. Eighteen months later, those pounds are still missing.
- **And his diabetes?** GONE! Remember that at the beginning his random blood sugar was 939 mg/dl (normal <100) and his HbA1c was 11.7%



(normal <6%). Today there is no evidence of diabetes: Stephan's blood sugar is 102 and his HbA1c is 4.9%. *With no diabetes medication.*

So, how did he do it?

It took hard work, determination, and the practical application of evidence-based choices. Stephan reports that the following five steps were the main changes he made:

1. **Avoided sweet drinks and sodas**, and chose water and coffee/tea instead.
2. **Started making more food at home** (with his wife's help) and stopped eating fast food.
3. **Brought his lunch to work**, often just reheating a slice of his breakfast frittata.
4. **Watched both the quality *and* quantity of his food**, and in the process found that his tastes had changed so that he began to actually *prefer* whole, minimally-processed foods.
5. **Resumed his former habit of regular exercise**, and did something vigorous almost every day.

Why it matters so much

Stephan's example is noteworthy in many ways. Not only has he reversed his type 2 diabetes, he has also dramatically reduced his long term risks for heart disease, stroke, dementia, and some cancers. His quality of life has been transformed. His body is free of pharmaceuticals and their side effects. Furthermore, Stephan is saving himself *and* his insurer thousands of dollars a year.

Especially important is the powerful example he is to all of us, and particularly to those who may be struggling with similar risk factors. Stephan has demonstrated just how much can be achieved when we arm ourselves with knowledge and are motivated to make radical changes in our daily life.

The significance of reversing type 2 diabetes, as well as the closely-related condition called *insulin resistance*, is hard to over-emphasize. By using lifestyle to obliterate – not just “manage” – the risk of diabetes, patients can dramatically reduce their risk of cancer, dementia, heart disease and stroke.

For example, the simple lifestyle and whole food measures we recommend are associated with *one-eighth* the risk of premature heart attack and stroke, *one-quarter* the risk of premature death, about *one-third* the risk of cancer,¹ and *less than half* the risk of dementia.²

The bottom line: Remember that the food and lifestyle decisions we make today will have a powerful effect on the quality of our tomorrows. So. . .

- Eat a whole-food Mediterranean style diet.
- Keep portions small enough to maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise daily.

To explore more ideas on the subject of minimizing your risks and maximizing your health, check out the first 60 pages of our book *Good Food, Great Medicine*, or download our six page guide to weight loss, preventing type 2 diabetes, and reversing insulin resistance (*An Evidence-based Guide to Successful Weight Loss and Reversing Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes*) using the “resources” tab on our website:

<http://www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com>

All set to avoid colds and flu this fall?

For tips, see our patient handout on the website.

Research Update: We've now enrolled 3 patients in phase two of our study to see if our glutamine, honey, and yogurt 'pudding' can benefit patients undergoing radiation therapy for cancers of the lung and esophagus. We'll keep you posted. Thanks to all of you who have helped with funding.

Speaking Events

10/15/2011 – Oregon Society of Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Rehabilitation (OSCVPR) 16th Annual Mtg: Miles Hassell MD: *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Healthcare Crisis: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* OHSU Center for Health & Healing, Portland, Oregon. <http://www.oscvpr.org/>

10/19/2011 – Association of PeriOperative Registered Nurses Chapter Meeting: Miles Hassell MD: *Chocolate and Wine: Their Role in Good Health.* Providence St Vincent Medical Center, Portland, Oregon.

10/23/2011 – Oregon Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine: Miles Hassell MD: *Panel discussion following screening of controversial film “Forks over Knives.”* Gerding Theater at the Armory, Portland, Oregon. To purchase tickets call 503.893.5993 or visit <http://www.oaaom.com/>

11/17/2011 – School of Physician Assistant Studies: Miles Hassell MD: *Endocrinology Lecture – Reversing Insulin Resistance.* Pacific University, Hillsboro, Oregon.

¹ van Dam, R. et al. BMJ 2008;337:a1440

² Sofi, F et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2010;92:1189-96

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

1 Thess. 5:21(KJV)