

may be treated with oral drugs or insulin injections. Type 2, which is also known as adult-onset diabetes, occurs most often in people over 40.

First Symptoms

March 29, 1954: Hunt can point to the day when he first knew he had diabetes. He says he had been "having difficulties" for about two weeks prior to the diagnosis. "I had all of the classic symptoms. You're incredibly thirsty, so you're drinking all the time. In the morning just barely able to get out of bed. Energy levels really low, loss of weight." Hunt had been playing hockey the previous Sunday and found he had no energy. So Monday morning he went to see his doctor, who immediately recognized the signs and symptoms, and had Hunt in the hospital within the hour. His life would be changed forever.

Even with the availability of insulin, it is estimated that approximately one-half million North Americans die as a result of diabetes and its complications like heart and kidney disease, stroke, blindness and amputation each year. Diabetes is a disease that touches millions in one way or another, whether it's those with the disease, friends or family members who are suffering the implications.

Simply put, diabetes is a serious disease that impairs the body's ability to use food properly, says the JDF. Normally, glucose, a form of sugar produced when starches and sugars are digested, is burned as fuel to supply the body with energy. This process - turning food into energy - is called metabolism. But in order to metabolise glucose properly, the body requires another substance: insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced



by the pancreas, a gland located just beneath the stomach; its job is to regulate the body's use of glucose. Insulin is essential to the meta-

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bolic process. Trying to burn glucose without insulin is like trying to cook food without heat. It can't be done. And that's the problem for people with diabetes: they either don't produce enough insulin to properly metabolise glucose or the insulin they have works inefficiently. Without insulin to turn glucose into energy the glucose piles up in the bloodstream and spills into the urine. Excessively high levels of sugar in the blood and the urine are the hallmarks of untreated diabetes.

When he was first diagnosed, Hunt says, there were no small, hand-held machines that monitored his blood sugar, he would have to monitor his urine five or six times a day. If his reading was high he would "go out and exercise and try to get it down", going for a long walk or doing push ups and sit-ups. One drawback to the urine testing was that it could take two hours to reflect the results. It wasn't until the 1980s that the hand-held monitors were developed. Now, he takes a pinprick sample of blood, which is then read by the monitor and in seconds it gives him the results. He still tests himself six times a day-"they say you should do it four times a day but I do it more than that. Before I eat any meal I always take a blood test, I always take a test first thing in the morning and I take a test the last thing at night."

Brian Miller, of the Quinte Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association, whose late daughter had diabetes as a child, says younger children and babies "cannot tell you the symptoms or what the symptoms are". Being a parent or

guardian of a child with diabetes is a "twenty-four hour-a-day job".

"There is a lot of stress of the parents of young, young children," he says. If the child is playing hard and over-exerting herself and gets dizzy and falls down, "you can't start giving them orange juice when they are passed out."

"But the younger they are it is surprising what the kids know about it," he notes, because they learn early on what they should and should not eat and drink. It is the newly diagnosed teens that can be more problematic, says Miller, because they may already be in the habit of drinking pop and eating chocolate bars, for example - which can adversely affect their health-"eating what I want, when I want."

Ironically, Hunt's father learned of his own diabetes after he himself was diagnosed. Hunt says he doesn't know if his father's diabetes predated his own, if it did it was a "very mild", but he was diagnosed when in his early 50s and died nine years later. His father, he says, was "in denial" of his diabetes and did not take the necessary precautions dying of

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heart failure.

Although leading a full life, Hunt says that there is virtually no aspect of activities that is left untouched: for example, camping in the summer is limited because he needs to ensure his insulin does not become too warm. When traveling by air or train he has his insulin refrigerated by the crew.

While much study and research and many trials and tests still need to be done, as the report concludes, the "future is a great deal brighter than before."