

TYPE 2

‘I want to help people GET healthy,’

After losing 31kg and reversing his *need for insulin*, Rad Kurilic, 45, has embarked on a new career



Was your diagnosis a surprise?

It sure was. Some family members had type 2 diabetes but I never thought it could happen to me. I was overweight – I was 110kg and I’m 186cm tall – and sometimes I was a bit naughty with what I ate, but I wasn’t eating lollies or cakes every day. It never occurred to me that I might be at risk of getting sick.

So how did you know something was amiss?

Whenever my wife, Sam, and I ate out, I’d feel really tired – sometimes to the point of actually falling asleep – within 45 minutes of eating. I didn’t think much of it, but one day I felt really ill and Sam had to call a doctor to our home. He took a urine sample and said I could have diabetes. I said, ‘No way.’ But then I saw my regular GP. He said my sugar levels were high and it was serious, and that was why I’d been so tired.

How did you cope with the news?

Sam and I were pretty shocked. Suddenly we had to go to all of these appointments and I had to start taking tablets. It was like, wow – what is going on? Then, about four weeks later, I was rushed to hospital with a possible kidney or liver infection, which doctors thought was related to diabetes. After two days, my doctor put me on insulin, which I had to inject twice daily.

I was really upset. I’d seen my mum and brother using needles and the thought of that made it even worse. While I’m not afraid of needles, it felt like everything in my life had suddenly changed.

I went through a stage where I just stopped taking the insulin. Sam saw it in the fridge and took me to the doctor, who blasted me. He said there are famous sports people on insulin, which was a wake-up call.

Things didn’t get easier, though, and I ended up in hospital again after collapsing at work with a hypo (low blood glucose levels). That was pretty scary, because until my diabetes diagnosis, I’d never been admitted to hospital.

Did anything help you deal with needing insulin?

My diabetes educator handled it really well. She just passed me the insulin and needle and said, ‘This is how you do it. We’re not going to talk about it until you jab yourself.’ Once I’d done it, she said, ‘See – it’s fine.’ I really appreciated that we didn’t sit around talking, building it up into an even more traumatic exercise.

What lifestyle changes did you have to make?

I had to completely change the way I ate. My parents are from Serbia, so I grew up eating heavy meat dishes with lots of carbs.



*'I couldn't believe it when the slim-line jeans fitted. It was like **ALL MY CHRISTMASSES** came at once'*



STEPPING UP

'I want to live longer for my kids and beautiful wife,' says Rad with his wife Sam (above) and children XXXX and XXXX (right).

I started eating less meat and more vegies and salads, and drinking lots of water. I cut back my portions and started walking a few times a week. But weight loss just wasn't happening. I only lost about 3kg in three months.

Sam is a consultant with Cambridge Weight Plan and she found it helped her lose weight after having our two children. She asked me to try it and, being a stubborn male, I said no.

So how did you get your weight back where you wanted it?

A few weeks later I changed my mind. Sam weighed and measured me and I started the program.

It works on meal replacements like shakes and bars, and the consultant guides you through what other food you can have. It was tough in the beginning – you're getting all the nutrition you need, but your body is adjusting to eating less. I had to remember I wanted to live longer for my kids and beautiful wife.

I now have Special K with low-fat milk for breakfast, then a Cambridge shake for morning tea. I'll have a multigrain wrap with chicken and salad and an apple for lunch, then a Cambridge bar for afternoon tea. At dinner, it's a piece of skinless chicken with steamed vegies and salad.

What difference has it made to your weight and health?

I lost 31kg in six months. My doctor was over the moon! At first he slowly reduced my insulin. Now I don't need it at all. My sugar levels are usually around five, which is exactly where they should be. At 79kg, I'm the perfect weight for my height.

When I was 110kg, I just wanted to sit on the couch. Now I'm full of energy. A couple of times a week, Sam and I put the kids in the pram and walk for about an hour. It's like I'm alive again.

But the best thing has been shopping for clothes. I'm like a kid in a candy store. I used to wear XXL shirts and baggy jeans, but Sam said I should try the stretch slim-line jeans. I couldn't believe it when they fitted. It was like all my Christmases came at once.

I'm so grateful for Sam and the program I've become a consultant too. I want to help people with stories like mine. So far I have one type 2 client and he's lost 10kg in about seven weeks. It's early days, but it has already been rewarding.

Turn to page XX for a guide to improving insulin resistance. ■

Have diabetes and want to share your story? Email diabeticliving@pacificmags.com.au, or write to *Diabetic Living*, My Story, GPO Box 7805, Sydney, NSW 2001.