



Health Awareness

Taking Control Of Diabetes: A Way Of Life For 50 Years

(NAPSA)—More than 23 million Americans have diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If you or someone you care about has diabetes, the story of one woman may prove inspiring.

Joann Wappel has lived with diabetes for 50 years and refuses to let diabetes control her life. Recently awarded the Joslin 50-Year Medal and a Certificate of Achievement, Joann urges others with diabetes to manage their disease, keep active and do everything they can to live a healthy life.

A Scary Diagnosis

When Joann was just 8 years old, she began experiencing weight loss, frequent urination, extreme thirst and fatigue. Consequently, she was hospitalized for a couple of weeks.

During that time, Joann's parents received the news that diabetes was responsible for her symptoms. "At that time, there was very little information available about diabetes, including how to treat it," says Joann.

"Before leaving the hospital, my family had to learn how to inject insulin, test my urine, handle any potential complications and manage my food intake, including weighing foods, counting calories and avoiding sugars," adds Joann. "My father told me that insulin injections and eating the right foods were something I had to do every day to stay healthy."

When Joann returned home, her parents educated their family members and friends, teaching

many of them to inject insulin so that their daughter's health would always be safeguarded.

Joann's parents refused to coddle her. They insisted that she enjoy a normal childhood and be allowed to be a child who could do those things children like to do—run, play sports, socialize with friends, etc.

Even though her mother had to boil glass syringes and insulin needles to ensure a sterile injection—and her father used a whetstone to

With all the technology available today, it's possible to live a full and healthy life with diabetes. 

sharpen insulin needles—daily injections became a simple fact of life.

"It was much harder then than it is today to manage diabetes," remembers Joann. "We had no tools to test blood sugar at home, and there was little knowledge about how carbohydrates turned into sugar. Also, injecting insulin today is so much easier and less painful than it was 50 years ago because the needles are so much thinner and sharper. I use one of the shortest insulin pen needles, the BD mini pen needle."

Currently, Joann is a learning consultant in a New Jersey school system and enjoys working with and helping special education students. Joann makes certain that her colleagues and friends know that she has type 1 diabetes, and

she credits her co-workers for the support they have given her.

Staying Healthy

"Today, with all that we know about diabetes—including the technology to monitor our blood sugar, inject insulin and effectively manage this disease—there is no excuse not to take care of yourself," says Joann. "I manage the disease in collaboration with my diabetes specialist. I take care of the day-to-day management, and he monitors my health to ensure that I maintain normal, healthy glucose levels."

Joann follows good insulin injection practices with each insulin injection, including proper needle use, site selection and site rotation. She always uses a new insulin pen needle with every injection to prevent potential infection. "Living with diabetes for 50 years, I can honestly say that single-use insulin injections are a real convenience," she adds.

Working full-time, Joann exercises, does a lot of walking, takes yoga classes and eats right.

"I encourage people who are newly diagnosed with diabetes—or living with diabetes—to seize every day," says Joann. "Take advantage of the advanced technologies, education and support services that are available. Use all the resources you can to help yourself manage this disease. And most of all, seek out opportunities to enjoy life."

For more information about good insulin injection practices, visit www.bd.com/goodinjectionpractices/.

Editors' Note: November is American Diabetes Month, a time to shine a spotlight on a serious disease that leads to potentially life-threatening complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness and amputation.