Just Another Tool for the Toolbox

An Introduction to Insulin for People with Type 2 Diabetes
Writing by Chrisanne Sikora and Cathy Leamy
Art by Cathy Leamy

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**MEET SUZIE**

Suzie recently learned that she has type 2 diabetes, and she’s not sure how to feel about it. She’s trying to cook more meals at home, and she’s taking cooking classes at her local community center. The Greek food classes are her favorite!

**FUN FACT:**
Suzie and Ray started out as neighbors and became best friends. Suzie’s grateful to have him and his wife Lucia as her “support team” while she makes changes to her routine.

**MEET RAY**

Ray has been living with diabetes for several years, and he’s made some healthy changes in his diet. In the summer, he loves playing backyard baseball with his nephew, JJ. Staying active in the rest of the year, though, is a challenge!

**FUN FACT:**
Family is the most important thing to Ray. He puts his energy into living a healthy life, and he hopes that he’s inspiring his family to join in.
MEET
THE FAMILY & FRIENDS

LUCIA
Ray’s wife Lucia works in her family’s restaurant downtown. She’s taking a big role in helping Ray with meal planning. Don’t mess with the chef!

PAOLA, JJ, AND BABY MAYA
Ray’s sister Paola recently moved to the area so that Ray can watch his niece and nephew when she has to work late. JJ is an active six-year-old who loves sports—especially baseball and soccer—and helping take care of his baby sister, Maya.

UNCLE MARK
Suzie’s uncle Mark was his town’s handyman before he retired. Suzie worked in his shop when she was younger. She still hangs out with him and helps him restore vintage cars.

KAREN, CERTIFIED DIABETES EDUCATOR
Karen is a Nurse Practitioner and Certified Diabetes Educator. Ray started seeing her soon after he learned that he had diabetes. Together, they created a management plan that helped Ray lower his A1C. They make a good team!

THE TOOLBOX
A toolbox is how Ray thinks of all the pieces of his diabetes management plan. Each tool has a job in helping him stay healthy, just like how his regular toolbox has tools for taking care of his house.

... uh-oh, where is that box, anyway?
WE WILL BE, IF THE GRILL WILL EVER TURN ON!

C'MON, BUDDY!

TRY CLICKING ANOTHER HUNDRED TIMES, RAY.

CAN I TAKE A LOOK?

YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS, LITTLE GUY. SUZIE CAN FIX EVERYTHING!

(SIGH) ALMOST EVERYTHING.

I SAW MY DOCTOR ON TUESDAY.

WE'VE TRIED DIFFERENT MEDICINES FOR MY DIABETES, BUT ...

... THEY'RE NOT WORKING THAT WELL.

AND NOW I HAVE TO TRY ...

... TAKING INSULIN.

HUH, NO KIDDING. WELL, I'VE BEEN ON IT FOR A WHILE.

I'LL GET YOU MY MAIL ORDER PHARMACY INFO. GOOD BARGAINS!
RAY, THIS IS A BIG DEAL! I THOUGHT I HAD MY DIABETES UNDER CONTROL!

YOU DO!

HOW DOES INSULIN CHANGE THAT?

INSULIN IS BIG SERIOUS STUFF, RIGHT? THINGS MUST BE REALLY BAD!

NO WAY, DIABETES IS THE BIG SERIOUS STUFF.

INSULIN HELPS KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL.

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW TO MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR?

UM, I WATCH WHAT I EAT, EXERCISE, TAKE PILLS, GET REGULAR CHECKUPS ...

SO THAT’S LIKE YOUR TOOLBOX FOR DIABETES, INSULIN IS JUST A NEW TOOL YOU CAN USE.

SPEAKING OF TOOLS ... I HOPE YOU’VE GOT SOME, FOR REAL.

WE MAY NEED MORE THAN YOUR CLICKING FINGER TO FIX THIS!

OR MAYBE THE TWO HUNDREDTH TIME’S THE CHARM?
Insulin is a thing your body makes.

Your body turns sugar into a kind of fuel called glucose.

To get that fuel, your body's cells need help from ...

... insulin! He's like their glucose delivery man!
Type 2 diabetes means that your body’s insulin isn’t working well or the cells aren’t listening.

Taking insulin as medicine is like bringing in backup. It helps the delivery man get the fuel into the cells.

La la, I can’t hear you.

Ok! I’m coming!

And I went on insulin ... wow, three years ago? Already?

Hey! I found the tools!

So that’s why I put insulin in my “diabetes toolbox.”

It was the right tool at the right time, not something to save until last.

And this is in your regular toolbox because ...?

Mr. Beats! That’s where the little guy went!
Learn How, Practice, and Get Better

HMM... YOU SAID THIS IGNITION BUTTON BATTERY IS NEW?

YUP.

UH, ALL THE GUESTS ARE HERE... CAN I HELP SPEED THIS UP?

YOU WANNA HELP? FINE, I'VE GOT ANOTHER INSULIN QUESTION!

SO, I NEED IT 'CAUSE MY BLOOD SUGAR IS TOO HIGH.

THAT, I CAN HANDLE!

BUT I'M WORRIED IT'LL GO TOO FAR AND MAKE MY BLOOD SUGAR TOO LOW?

THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN YOU TAKE TOO MUCH BY MISTAKE, OR SKIP MEALS.

I'VE BEEN THERE.

MAN, I DON'T KNOW. SO MUCH TO LEARN.

RAY! IS THIS AN X-ACTO KNIFE WITH NO CAP ON?

I'M GONNA SCREW UP AND HURT MYSELF.

YOU'VE GOTTA STORE IT RIGHT OR YOU'LL HURT YOURSELF!
Sorry! I hardly use this stuff!

How'd you get so good with tools?

Years of trial and error and advice from my uncle Mark.

So you had to learn and practice and even mess up sometimes.

Oh yeah! You should have seen me!

Watch it, you'll strip the screw.

Wzzzz!

Hey wise guy, I get where you're going! It's the same with insulin!

I'll get better at handling blood sugar just like I did with tools!

Ah, the igniter wires are loose, there we go -

Yup, you've got it -

Wait, did you just fix the grill?

Looks like it, yeah!

I think you've got this.

I think I do.
SO GLAD I SAVED MY DIET’S “DAY OFF” FOR TODAY!

NOT LIKE THAT DIET WILL HELP ME NOW ...
THANKS, INSULIN!

I WAS TELLING RAY: MY DOCTOR SAYS I SHOULD GO ON INSULIN. THAT STUFF MAKES YOU GAIN A TON OF WEIGHT.

RAY DID Gain A BIT OF WEIGHT AT FIRST, BUT IT WAS A GOOD SIGN - HIS BODY WAS GETTING TO A HEALTHY PLACE.

THE INSULIN WAS RESETTING HIS SYSTEM, YOU KNOW?

NEVER MIND YOUR PANTS SIZE - INSULIN’S GONNA BE GOOD FOR YOUR WHOLE BODY.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I KNOW BETTER WAYS TO LOSE WEIGHT!

NOOO, DON'T MAKE US GO TO ANOTHER PUNK ROCK JUMP ROPE CLASS!

♫ yeaaaahh! rock rock rock arrrrgh♬
It's cookout time!

Thanks to Suzie for fixing the grill!

You don't look so psyched for someone who just saved the day.

What's up?

Ah, thinking about insulin.

I took care of the grill, me!

So why can't I take care of myself?

Why didn't I do more for my health?

I wish I had a time machine. Then I could really take care of this.

We need to talk.
When I was told that I should go on insulin, I didn’t take it well.

Really? What made you change your mind?

Lucia and I went on vacation, and we hit a fork in the road. The car could go one way or the other. That was all. I realized it was the same with me.

I could beat myself up and do nothing about my diabetes... or... I could put that energy into my health and actually do something.

Ray’s Pity Party

And I think going on insulin is how you’re taking care of yourself.

Aw, you just want to keep me around for my grill-fixing skills! Busted! You got me!
Hey Ray! Your wife says the food’s ready.

Great! Just gotta do my insulin first, thanks!

Uh, Ray? Can I look on and see how it’s done?

Time for me to get prepared!

I can do this!

This ain’t nothing!

She’s so tough!

Here we go!

I used to use syringes, but now I use insulin pens instead.

Aw, I was ready to be an action hero!

The insulin’s inside of the pen.

You put one of those needles on the end.

The needle is in this case?

Ha ha, it’s Bitsy!
WHEN I USE THE PEN, I PICK A SPOT TO INJECT AND PINCH IT.

THEN I POKE THE NEEDLE IN AND PRESS THE BUTTON ON THE END.

I HOLD IT THERE FOR TEN SECONDS ...

AND THEN PULL IT OUT. IT DOESN'T EVEN STING!

7 ...
6 ...
5 ...

IT'S NO FUN, BUT YOU GET USED TO IT. JUST ONE OF THOSE UNCOMFORTABLE THINGS YOU'VE GOT TO DO IN LIFE.

LIKE FLOSSING!

SORRY WE'RE LATE!

SOMEONE DID A BOOM-BOOM ON THE WAY HERE AND NEEDED CHANGING!

YUCK! THAT WINS THE AWARD FOR "MOST UNCOMFORTABLE THING IN LIFE!"

IT WASN'T ME!

OR SHAVING!

OR CAR PAYMENTS!

OR SNOW SHOVELING!
Juggling - it can be done!

The glcometer says what my blood sugar is now. Then I figure out how much insulin I need.

So much to keep track of!

How do you juggle it and the rest of life?

The juggling might actually be easier.

I’ve had more energy since I started insulin.

Lots of people have different things to juggle around food.

This pill with dinner...

...this one a half-hour before breakfast.

Uh-oh, I’m allergic to most of these...

And you can try so many options! Short-acting once-a-day other medicines.

Meal planning for an adult, a baby, and a six-year-old.

Man, this stuff just comes so easily to you!

Mr. Perfect guy with diabetes.
NOT REALLY ... I'VE MESSED UP A LOT OVER THE YEARS.

THE STORIES I COULD TELL YOU!

WAIT, DID YOU DO YOUR INSULIN FIRST?

BLEAH!

OK, READY TO INJECT!

HEY JJ! CAN I GET A COUNTDOWN?

YEAH!

AND GO!

10! 9! 8! 7! 6! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

AND BOOM! YOU'RE DONE!

LET'S EAT!

YUM! I'M IN LOVE WITH THIS HUMMUS DIP!
The Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) Program at Massachusetts General Hospital is an outpatient program designed to help patients and their families learn to live well with diabetes.

You can find more stories about Suzie and Ray on our blog:

mghdiabeteseducation.com

To learn more about the DSME program, visit:

massgeneral.org/dsme