



A delicious dish: steamed vegetables and fish sprinkled with butter, Bragg's Liquid Aminos and Italian style breadcrumbs. Created by someone who used to hate vegetables.

Whoa! Diabetes!

By Tom Whitney

I learned recently after a routine blood test at the Bay Clinic in Hilo, Hawai'i for an upper respiratory infection that I had elevated blood sugar levels. A second test confirmed it: at age 68 I had adult onset Type 2 diabetes. My level of glucose attached to my red blood cells was 7.9 per cent. Less than seven percent is the goal of the American Diabetes Association. My blood pressure was somewhat high also. I was given medication for both and Dr. Steve Warsh recommended I take the ten-week series of diabetes classes the Bay Clinic offered.

The problem with diabetes

I was told that diabetes is serious but that I shouldn't panic. I may have caught it early. Many people do not realize they have it. Problems that diabetes can lead to include: heart disease, blindness, nerve damage, kidney damage and amputation of your toes and feet. Whoa! It can be serious.

The Hawaii State Department of Health in 2004 released a report showing that In Hawaii, "Native Hawaiians have more than twice the percentage of diagnosed diabetes as whites, 7.9 to 3.4. Filipinos are 7.5 and Japanese are 6.6 percent. In Hawaii, Native

Hawaiians are more than 5.7 times as likely as whites living in Hawaii to die from diabetes.” The Bay Clinic is making an effort to reach out to many ethnic communities. They now have a class for people from the Marshall Islands.

Information on diabetes is readily available on the Internet at the American Diabetes Association site: www.diabetes.org including a risk test for those who are wondering if they might have it. The Association says that many of the risks are preventable if you are diagnosed early on and start to do something about it.

“What’s good about diabetes,” Kenton Aichele was asked during one class. His own answer was that, finally, coming to the classes sponsored by the Bay Clinic in Hilo helped him take his health seriously and become actively involved in the problem. He has started creating some of his own recipes, watching what he eats, exercising and attending the classes regularly. Class member Jim Foxworthy said his goal was to get off the diabetes medicine and the classes are helping. But many people are in denial.

In Aichele’s family he is more or less alone in being concerned about the disease. This reflects attitudes in the larger society. Nationally the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta estimates that about 6.3 per cent of the population, or 18.2 million people in the United States have diabetes. Almost a third do not know they have it. Many others are in denial.

In Hawaii, the most recent Hawaii Diabetes Report available from the Department of Health estimates that 72,000 to 100,000 people living in Hawaii currently have diabetes, of which 25,000 may be undiagnosed.

Maile Estabillio, program coordinator for the Bay Clinic said that the clinic has (700 – 1,200) patients who have diabetes. About 150 have come to some of the diabetes classes, and about thirty are regular attendees.

According to the state report, more than 900 people in Hawaii die each year from diabetes-related complications, making it the seventh leading cause of death in the state.



Kenton Aichele suggests we look at what’s good about learning that we have diabetes. He is a member of a group of people who have graduated from the ten-week diabetes program at the Bay Clinic and continues to meet.

Weekly Classes

Every Thursday morning for ten weeks from 9 a.m. until noon I gathered with about a dozen other Bay Clinic patients at the Clinic at 311 Kalanianaʻole Avenue in Hilo. Maile Estabillio, the Diabetes Self Management Program’s coordinator, guided us in learning about some aspect of the diabetes disease process, planning what we eat, exercise, medication management, monitoring sugar levels in our blood, foot and eye care, lifestyle changes and psychological adjustment.

Stephen Koshell is a Physician’s Assistant who is also a Diabetes Educator, a sub-specialty in the medical field. He led many of the classes talking about the disease and

was theatrical and effective as he talked about our sticky sticky sticky diabetic blood cells that have difficulty squeezing through our tiny capillaries and cause us to lose feeling in our nerves and circulation in our feet, and other problems.

You have to become involved to treat it effectively

Usually when you go to the doctor for many illnesses, some medicine will be prescribed and you take it regularly each day at the same times until the problem goes away. Diabetes is different. It is a condition that you have to learn how to control, and your “medication” may change each day depending on a number of factors that you control. These include paying attention what you are eating that day, your stress level, the amount of physical activity you experience and the medications you are taking. Changes in the first three can suggest changes in your medication level. Therefore, you have to be aware all the time what is going on with yourself.

Making progress

A delightful part of the classes every week were the delicious food recipes and dishes prepared by Stacy Haumea, a registered dietitian who is part of the program. She got the class involved often with the help of her husband Desmon, a chef, who is also working with the program.

During the ten-week program my weight went from 222 pounds down to 203. People noticed. I felt better. My sweetheart Betsy attended a few classes and was surprised when she went to her doctor and found she had lost eleven pounds. Getting family members involved is recommended. It was working!

Time of day you eat is important

The biggest initial contributor to my weight loss was changing my time of eating. I had the habit of eating my one big meal in mid afternoon, soon feeling sleepy and nodding off. The best way for me now is to eat a good sized breakfast, smaller lunch and a smaller meal in the evening. We were taught that you should be awake for four or five hours after you eat to burn the food off as energy, rather than storing it as fat, which the early naps or long sleeps soon after eating do.

I kept a diary of everything I ate for a couple of weeks. And I also used the glucose meters to measure my blood sugar levels on a regular basis. The devices include a disposable spring-loaded sharp little needle that makes a painless little prick on your finger and causes a little drop of blood to form. This is picked up by a disposable tab that has been inserted into the meter device. In fifteen seconds it gives a reading. This process and recording the results helped to change my eating habits and understand what different kinds of meals do to my blood sugar.

Those who take insulin usually eat five or six times a day, small balanced meals each time. Stacy taught us to make these smaller and more balanced dishes.

Biggest food lesson: cut the white carbohydrates

Cut sugar, white rice, white flour, and potatoes.

For sweets one apple banana a day is good; they are naturally sweet, and two or three half cups of mixed fruit are recommended to be a regular part of our diets. Hawaiian “apple bananas” are about half the size of the large Cavendish kind and are just the right size to have one per day.

Splenda is a good sugar substitute for me. They even have a Splenda brown sugar blend that is nice on my morning oatmeal, recommended for its heart-healthy qualities.

I gave up those delicious double stuff Oreos, a small chocolate cake or a pie every other week, stopped my daily cup of ice cream in the evening, no Danish at Starbucks, nix on those chocolate donuts.

Loco mocos are gone! I cut those scoops of white rice; maybe once in a while. White flour is out. Bread or any baked goods should be labeled with the words “100% whole-wheat flour.” Otherwise don’t buy them. We started eating what we call Bible bread. There is a verse in the Bible in Ezekiel 4:9: "Take also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make bread of it . . ." The Food for Life company in Glendale, California, took this to heart and make a bread from seven organically grown freshly sprouted grains. Spelt is a kind of wheat that requires fewer fertilizers and has become popular in the organic farming movement. The bread can be found in freezer and cold compartments in grocery stores. The Alvarado Street brand is also a good one for the sprouted grains breads.

Potatoes are perhaps a little controversial. They have long been a staple food, but some diet analysts feel they should be grouped with the other white carbohydrates and avoided if you want to lose weight. I have cut back and now only bake one small yellow potato occasionally, about a third the size of the ones I used to eat. Potato portion control is at work. Brown rice works, and getting carbohydrates from eating much more fruit and vegetables is the best solution.

Don’t clean your plate: sorry, Mom

Most of us grew up hearing our mothers drilling it into us to clean our plates. Now we don’t have to. If you’re full, stop eating. Save the leftovers; make more casseroles with them. Fix less. Portion control is the name of this game. Do that and you *will* clean your plate.



Making veggies delicious

The things I hated to eat when I was young were vegetables. They were so boring except for the fresh sweet corn and asparagus from the garden. After starting the class and I learned that we should eat four to five cups of veggies and fruit every day. I didn't know how that would be possible. When I buy them fresh, they are constantly becoming rotten before I realize it. However, I found a way: I invented a nice dish using frozen vegetables and fruits.



Ingredients for Delicious Steamed Vegetables: Normandy blend of vegetables; butter, Braggs Liquid Aminos, breadcrumbs and optionally, ahi or salmon.

• **Steamed veggies sprinkled with butter, Braggs Liquid Aminos, and breadcrumbs.** Steam a bowl of frozen Normandy blend vegetables (cut broccoli, cauliflower florets, and cut carrots) for twenty minutes. Take a frozen stick of butter, use a flat grater with the large holes and lightly coat the veggies on the plate with butter. About two table spoons worth. Frozen sticks of butter substitutes could also be used. Sprinkle a few drops of Braggs Liquid Aminos all over. This is a substitute for salty soy sauce and contains many amino acids reputed to be healthy. It has its own tangy good taste. Finally, sprinkle Italian style breadcrumbs lightly over the creation. I demonstrated it for the class and they liked it.

We now buy five pound bags of frozen mixed vegetables and mixed fruit and throw them into the freezer. About every other day I will take down the bag of vegetables, a bowl and throw them into the vegetable steamer.

Sometimes I will put a half-pound of some frozen fish in with the veggies; sometimes I add fruit and steam it also. Steam them all for twenty minutes and they are ready. There is my main meal for the day. Total time to prepare: five minutes.

Joining the Warriors Against Diabetes

After the ten weeks of classes I began attending another group that meets once a week and discusses a variety of issues, often suggested by people attending the sessions. These sessions are interesting because the topics vary from week to week depending on feedback from the participants.

The Bay Clinic's Self-Management Education Program was the fulfillment of the vision of Charlotte Grimm who is a Nurse Practitioner at the Clinic. In 2006, AlohaCare, a nonprofit corporation founded by the Hawaii's community health centers awarded the

Bay Clinic funds to address the diabetes problem on the Big Island. The American Diabetes Association will soon credential the program. It will expand to other Clinic locations in Kea‘au and Ka‘u.

Grimm said that in the two years of classes “improvements have been shown in all measures including glucose levels, reductions in risks of renal complications, compliance with eye and foot exams, and improvements in self-management goals, screenings and lifestyle changes.”

Grimm has led many of the group’s discussions and emphasized that in everything they do at the Bay Clinic they want to use evidence-based knowledge. One day she shared three very useful web sites with the class that are free to the general public and are excellent sources of medical information: WebMD, the American Diabetes Association site and the American Family Physician site.

Dr. Tony Brown, Medical Director of the Bay Clinic, spoke to the group recently and explored how he is considering some changes to the program by focusing more on the psychological aspects in the Clinic’s diabetes program. A series of studies have shown that there is a connection between depression and diabetes, he told the group.

He also talked about the Bay Clinic’s future and what it is facing. “Bay Clinic never says no, as many other medical practices do. We take everybody and never say no and the numbers keep growing. And the number of people who don’t have anything in their wallets also keeps growing.” He assured the group that the Bay Clinic is in good financial shape and will continue. He said last year there were about 15,000 people who visited the clinic about 47,000 times. This year 67,000 visits are expected.

Brown explained that one way Clinic meets the demand is that they employ many nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Currently there are nine physicians and seven nurse practitioners. These are people who have a combination of education and experience short of becoming physicians, which nevertheless qualifies them to diagnose and treat clinic patients and prescribe medicines. At all times they are on duty, they must have the ability to call a medical doctor if necessary for consultation. The nurse practitioners can operate independently. Physicians’ assistants are always working closely with physicians who must sign off on what they prescribe.

This medical model enables the Bay Clinic to treat so many people. In the past year Brown said, the Bay Clinic became the largest medical group on the Big Island.



Charlotte Grimm checks Jim Foxworthy’s blood pressure during a recent class session.