

Crash course diet reverses Type 2 diabetes in a week

Britain's 2.5 million people with Type 2 diabetes are offered new hope today as scientists show the disease can be reversed in as little as seven days by going on a crash-course diet.

Adhering to the strict 600 calorie-a-day diet causes fat levels in the pancreas to plummet, restoring normal function, found Prof Roy Taylor of Newcastle University.

The discovery, a "radical change" in understanding of the condition, holds out the possibility that sufferers could cure themselves - if they have the willpower.

Until recently received medical wisdom was that Type 2 diabetes was largely irreversible.

But this small-scale study indicates that defeating it could be easier than commonly thought.

Prof Taylor asked 11 volunteers, all recently diagnosed, to go on what he admitted was an "extreme diet" of specially formulated drinks and non-starchy vegetables, for eight weeks.

After just a week, pre-breakfast ('fasting') blood sugar levels had returned to normal, suggesting a resumption of correct pancreas function.

After eight weeks, all had managed to reverse their diabetes. Three months on, seven remained free of it.

Prof Taylor explained that too much fat "clogged up" the operation of the pancreas at a cellular level, preventing normal secretion of insulin which regulates blood sugar.

When this fat was removed - by way of the diet - normal function resumed.

He said: "This is a radical change in understanding Type 2 diabetes. It will change how we can explain it to people newly diagnosed with the condition.

"While it has long been believed that someone with Type 2 diabetes will always have the disease, and that it will steadily get worse, we have shown that we can reverse the condition."

Gordon Parmley, 67, from Stocksfield in Northumberland, one of the volunteers, said: "At the end of the trial, I was told my insulin levels were normal and after six years, I no longer needed my diabetes tablets.

"Still today, 18 months on, I don't take them. It's astonishing really that a diet - hard as it was - could change my health so drastically."

UK Homeopathy

The idea of the crash diet came from the observation that gastric bypass patients often quickly stopped being Type 2 diabetics.

Many thought this was because surgery affected gut hormones which had a knock-on impact on the pancreas.

But Prof Taylor thought it might really be because the surgery severely constrained what patients could eat. He set up the diet experiment to test his 'fat' hypothesis.

He said special MRI scans showed the proportion of fat in volunteers' pancreases dropped during the eight weeks, from eight to six per cent.

"This study does not just show proof of principal, it shows proof of mechanism," he concluded.

He believed the diet would also work in people who had suffered from Type 2 diabetes for years, as bariatric surgery patients tended to remain diabetes-free. He is presenting the findings to the American Diabetes Association conference in San Diego this weekend.

Dr Iain Frame, director of research at Diabetes UK, which supported the study, said: "It shows that Type 2 diabetes can be reversed, on a par with successful surgery without the side effects. However, this diet is not an easy fix."

Whether the reversal "would remain in the long term" was still an open question.

Despite the diet's potential, Prof Taylor was a little pessimistic about how many would stick to it.

"Maybe five per cent," he said. "However, if they did, it would save the NHS many millions of pounds."

Almost a tenth of the entire NHS budget, or about £9 billion a year, is spent managing diabetes and its complications. Most of that is spent on type 2 diabetics, who outnumber type 1 diabetics by about nine to one.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/8594293/Crash-course-diet-reverses-Type-2-diabetes-in-a-week.html>