Check Yourself Out Today!

March 24, 2015 By Kate Ferguson

Currently observed on the fourth Tuesday in March, today marks the American Diabetes Association's Diabetes Alert Day. The one-day observance was created to sound the alarm to Americans about how serious diabetes can be if the illness is left undiagnosed or untreated.

When I was a child, I recall my parents discussing Miss or Mister So-and-So who had a "touch of sugar." At that time, I didn't know that this euphemism meant the person had diabetes. But as I became older and took more notice of those who were described with this phrase, I began to realize that a laundry list of health issues, such as heart troubles, amputations, blindness, kidney disease and stroke were also linked with it.

Many years later, I learned one of my cousins had developed type 2 diabetes. After she hit 40, she'd gained a huge amount of weight and had difficulty keeping off the pounds. As I became more health conscious and more deeply immersed in studying diseases and the role nutrition and fitness played in their onset, treatment or reversal, I realized that my cousin exhibited several of the risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

Before she'd been diagnosed, my cousin never realized that she could possibly develop type 2 diabetes. She was a cook in the cafeteria of an elementary school and was celebrated in our family for her ability to "burn those pots."

A few years after she was diagnosed, my cousin constantly complained about how little time she had to cook for herself at home. She wasn't active and rarely even walked. She commuted to work and took a bus right from her house to the school where she worked. At the age of 60, she was placed on meds to control her diabetes. I remember that she was very unhappy about having to pop these pills.

One day she called me with some optimistic news. She told me that she was due for retirement and planned to overhaul her lifestyle. No more fast food eating; she was going to start by entering a diet program. The next time I spoke with her, she'd dropped about 10 pounds. She was ecstatic. She also started a walking program. Soon, she lost another 10 pounds.

By the time she was able to retire, my cousin had lost at least 30 pounds. Every time we talked, she'd tell me how she so looked forward to cooking her meals. Then came the big news: Her doctors took her off the diabetes meds.

Today, my cousin still struggles to maintain her exercise program and keep her weight down. But she’s remained free from having to down diabetes meds.

Despite my cousin’s ups and downs and her struggle to keep the pounds at bay by eating healthy and staying active, to me, she’s a success story by any measurement. When I think of her, I consider how much sooner she could have started her lifestyle changes if only she’d realized how at risk she was to develop type 2 diabetes. If she had, she’d never have become diabetic in the first place.

I’m saying all this to say, that taking the Diabetes Risk Test (available in English and Spanish) is a wake-up call that all of us can use. Don’t be like my cousin and wait. Click here to answer a couple of questions and learn your risk of type 2 diabetes.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/blog/are-you-at-risk-of-type-2-diab