

2 August 2022

Can we really make type 2 diabetes ‘go away’?

Diabetes Victoria has released a new podcast episode on type 2 diabetes remission, exploring the important question; *can type 2 diabetes really be stopped?*

During the *Living Well with Diabetes* podcast, Jack Fitzpatrick chats with diabetes nurse educator Catherine Amadio and dietitian Jane Robinson about current research trials and what it takes to achieve remission.

“Generally, type 2 diabetes is defined as a progressive condition,” explains Ms Amadio.

“As time goes by people need higher doses or different types of glucose lowering medication, including insulin, to manage their glucose levels. Recently, some studies have shown that type 2 diabetes can be put into ‘remission’ in some people.”

Recent research suggests that ‘remission’ of type 2 diabetes is possible through significant weight loss. This can be achieved following intensive dietary and lifestyle changes or bariatric surgery in which a person’s stomach is surgically made smaller.

After two years, one third of study participants had put their type 2 diabetes into remission. However, that means that two thirds had not been able to achieve or sustain remission. These studies show that, even with the best resources, remission is not sustainable for many people who attempt it.

The trials show that remission has been more likely for people who were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes less than five years ago, lost most weight, had lower HbA1c levels when attempting remission and who were not already requiring insulin therapy.

“Remission might not be for everyone, and it might not be permanent,” explains Mrs Robinson. “From clinical trials we know that around half of people with type 2 diabetes, who attempted remission, could not achieve it.”

“It’s important to remember that remission doesn’t mean that type 2 diabetes is cured or reversed in the long-term. While an elevated glucose level may no longer be present, the underlying tendency towards diabetes remains. Ongoing monitoring is required because glucose levels may increase again; some may even return to diagnosis levels,” said Mrs Robinson.

“There are several situations where intensive dietary changes could be dangerous for a person’s health. These include people taking certain medications or if they have other health issues; including kidney and

Diabetes Victoria

570 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
narrm, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country
comms@diabetesvic.org.au



We are here to help!

heart disease,” Ms Amadio explains. “Taking glucose lowering medications is not a sign of failure, it shows a person is taking their health seriously”.

Diabetes Victoria, CEO Mr Glen Noonan said, “The latest evidence on possibility of putting type 2 diabetes into remission is exciting. We need more research to identify how to optimise support for those who want to try this approach to managing their diabetes. We also need to appreciate that achieving and sustaining remission may not be possible for everyone.

“Not everyone living with type 2 diabetes is overweight or obese. We know that people don’t have equal opportunities to make these dramatic changes to their diets.”

People who do not achieve or sustain remission have not ‘failed’. Many people in these trials were more physically active and reduced their HbA1c. This has many positive health benefits, even if remission does not happen.

Mr Noonan said, “It’s important that people who wish to try type 2 diabetes remission seek the support of their diabetes healthcare team, who can advise them on how to make safe and sustainable changes to their diet, lifestyle and medications.”

The podcast guests further explore which scientific studies have been published on the topic; including the DiRECT study (United Kingdom), DIADEM-1 (Qatar) and a study by technology company Virta Health (United States). It is available for download here: diabetesvic.org.au/podcasts

Background:

- Catherine Amadio is a credentialled diabetes nurse educator and registered nurse, leads the team of diabetes nurse educators at Diabetes Victoria
- Accredited practising dietitian Jane Robinson is leading the team of dietitians at Diabetes Victoria.
- Jack Fitzpatrick is living with type 1 diabetes, hosts the *Living Well with Diabetes* podcast and is a former professional AFL player.
- There are currently more than 325,000 Victorians living with type 2 diabetes who are registered with the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS).
- People with type 2 diabetes, who wish to attempt diabetes remission, need to do so in close consultation with their healthcare team.
- For more information, get a copy of the position statement via diabetesaustralia.com.au/position-statements.

We support, empower and campaign for all Victorian affected by, or at risk of, diabetes.

Media inquiries: Annette Glenister – aglenister@diabetesvic.org.au or call 0400 772 722.

Diabetes Victoria

570 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
narrm, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country
comms@diabetesvic.org.au



We are here to help!