

# DIABETES

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2017

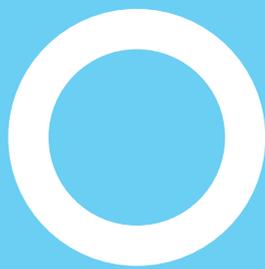
St. Michael's  
Inspired Care.  
Inspiring Science.



## Welcome to our First Newsletter

*Dana Whitham, RD, MSc, Clinical Leader/Manager*

Welcome to the Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology! In the past few years, our team of very motivated and dedicated staff have been working hard to provide you with an excellent patient experience. We'd like to take the experience beyond the times you are here in the clinic and provide you with regular updates on our classes, diabetes news, and other initiatives in the field of diabetes. Enjoy!



**World Diabetes Day  
Nov. 14**

**Diabetes Awareness Month: November**  
**World Diabetes Day : Nov. 14**  
**Theme for 2017: Managing Diabetes:**  
**It is not easy, but it is worth it.**

### Editors' Note



Dear reader,

This is our first ever diabetes newsletter! In this issue, you will find tips on how to prepare for your appointment, a story about traveling with an insulin pump, and much more.

Most importantly, we want to hear from you! Inside, you will find a survey where you can let us know what you would like from this newsletter, how you want to get it, and how often you would like to read it. Please consider submitting a catchy name for our newsletter. If we pick the name you submitted, you can win a prize. We'd also love to have your contribution. Whether you have a story or cartoon or tips or even just an idea, leave your contact information and we will get in touch. Return the survey to the front desk when you are finished.

Until next time,

*Your Editors – Annabell Hall RN, MN, CDE and Lucy Chen, RPh, PharmD*



## I am being kept alive by a machine

*Gillian Campbell, writer and person living with diabetes*

It's a startling statement to make and an uncomfortable truth: I am literally being kept alive by a machine. It happened more than 10 years ago. I had just started grade nine when I began to get sick over a period of several months. I started to drink more water — just a bottle during the afternoon, but soon I was sticking my face under the faucet to wet my mouth at all hours of the day and night. Strange things were starting to happen — in my nose, knots in my hair, pain in my legs. I would come home from school around four and sleep until my mom called me for supper. Eventually, my pants were starting to fall below my waist.

I was wearing sweats that morning in May — the day my life changed. My high school sweatshirt drooped over my skinny body as I held out my finger for my first glucose test. The doctor squeezed my finger and let the strip absorb the blood. I had yet to eat, but my blood sugar that morning was 14. This high number diagnosed itself: diabetes.

Soon after, I received a piece of news that I had been dreading: I was no longer permitted on the three-week canoe trip that I had been planning for months. Learning that this disease was going to inhibit me from exploring the Quebec

wilderness hurt even more than all the injections and finger pricks that I was now giving myself multiple times on a daily basis.

I know now that although my life was indeed different, it didn't change as much as I expected. I was still able to go to camp that summer, and I was still able to travel to Europe with my family. I just had to bring enough insulin and syringes to manage my blood sugar for the two weeks that I was away.

I was in my final year of high school and getting ready to go off to university in the fall when I began to consider other ways of receiving insulin. The insulin pump is a pager-sized device that is constantly delivering the hormone into the bloodstream, and allows for much more flexibility than injections. My first attempt did not go well. I was terrified of the needle jabbing into my side to attach the infusion set, and my fingers fumbled as I tried to change the insulin cartridge. I could not fathom having to count carbohydrates every time I wanted to eat. It felt like being diagnosed all over again.

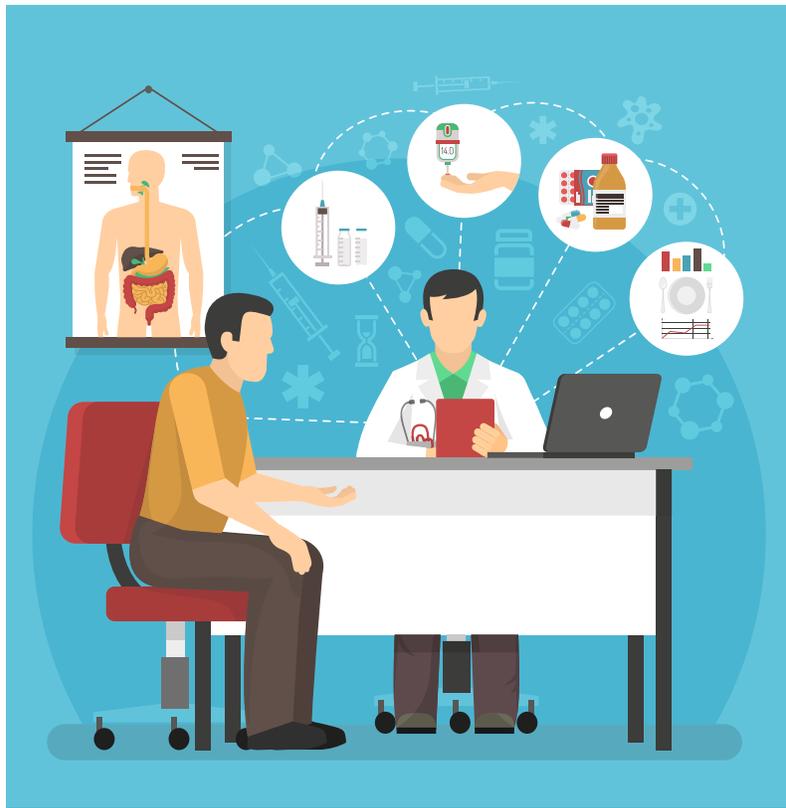
A few months later, I attempted to transition again...successfully. The insulin pump was attached to me

throughout four years at Queen's University, in the pool with me during lifeguard trainings, and it was there as I was having adventures of my own in Europe. I was still wearing it when I landed in China, with a hockey bag full of medication and supplies. I lasted 14 months living away from home and from my doctors. I was a type 1 diabetic living on the other side of the world, determined to make it work. When I finally saw my doctors again after my return: I was perfectly healthy.

### **I made it work.**

It wasn't easy being a diabetic traveller and expat. I constantly had to consider how many carbs I was eating, how much I was burning off every day by walking, and how much insulin I was taking to match what I was eating. I remember waking up in the middle of the night in a hostel in northern France with a blood glucose level of 2.2. In my state of confusion, I forgot that I had sugar in my bag, so it ended up being dry cornflakes stolen from the breakfast room that saved me. A month later, I ran out of insulin cartridges in London, less than a week before I was to fly home. For two days I was running in and out of Boots pharmacies to find the insulin that I needed. In China last year, my blood sugar dropped dramatically as I was climbing down from our hike along the Great Wall. The high-carb rice and sugar diet that is Chinese food certainly didn't help either. I was often trying to re-adjust my rates and estimating my carbohydrate intake at meals.

Had I been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes a century ago, I would have been dead before my 15th birthday. The machine — the insulin pump — is a marvel of modern medical technology that not only keeps me alive, but allows me to live however I choose. So maybe being kept alive by a machine isn't such a bad thing after all. It's my life, and I don't let diabetes control how I live. I control the insulin pump; I control my diabetes. Gillian Campbell's love of travel has also taken her to Hong Kong and New Zealand. Reprinted from [myDC blog](#) with permission of Diabetes Canada, 2017, [www.diabetes.ca](#).



# How to make the most of your visit with your Diabetes Doctor

By Kelly C'Brien

Annabell Hall, RN, CDE, MN

You have a short amount of time with your diabetes doctor. To get the most from your visit, it is best to be organized.

## Things to do before your visit:

- Put your appointment date in your calendar. There is very high demand for diabetes specialist appointments. Do your best to attend. If you truly cannot make your appointment, please call at least 48 hours ahead of time to reschedule. Bear in mind that your next appointment may be several months later.
- Having your blood tests done is very important to your care as the doctor will need to look at the results to make changes to your treatment. You should do blood work 1-2 weeks before your appointment. Put your requisition in a safe place. If you lose your requisition, you should get a new one from the front desk reception.
- If your doctor has recommended checking blood sugars at home, make sure you do so regularly. Your doctor needs to know about any high or low blood sugars you have so your treatment can be adjusted.

## Coming Soon Diabetes Classes

Sandi Williams, RD, CDE

The world of diabetes is always changing!

New medications, new meters, new discoveries.

Whether you are new to living with type 2 diabetes or maybe changing your treatment of diabetes or want a refresher, you can attend a short 3 hour class to get up to date and learn more about managing your diabetes. We talk about strategies, exercise, food, meters, and more.

Classes are available to you in the community close to where you live, or you can attend a class here at our Diabetes Centre.

If you want to attend a diabetes education class close to where you live check online at : [www.ontario.ca/locations/health](http://www.ontario.ca/locations/health)

If you want to attend a class at St Michael's Diabetes Centre please ask your Endocrinologist or Diabetes Educator for a referral.

At the Diabetes Centre we offer classes once a month on the fourth Thursday of the month from 2 to 5 pm.



Meter/pump upload stations: You can upload readings at computers in our waiting area. Your doctor will be able to view all your day-by-day results through an online portal.

Continued on page 4

## A team of researchers at St. Michael's Hospital has launched the first video of its project, dubbed DiaBiteSize, to help people develop the self-management skills needed to take control of their diabetes.



"DiaBiteSize originally came from a desire to find ways to help young people with Type 1 diabetes," said Dr. Andrew Advani, who is an endocrinologist with the Diabetes Comprehensive Care Program of St. Michael's and researcher in the hospital's Keenan Research Centre for Biomedical Science.

Dr. Advani explained, "We realized that we should provide diabetes information to young people, using a relatable medium and we hit upon the explainer video." Dr. Advani and his partner on the project, Dr. Janet Parsons, a researcher with St. Michael's Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute began developing their first explainer video for young adults and quickly realized that the medium has the potential to extend to all people with diabetes, not just millennials.

The researchers envision DiaBiteSize as the catalyst for a series of animated films offering information about diabetes self-care – from how to fill prescriptions, to how to treat a low blood sugar, to how youth can take on increasing responsibility. The project was funded by the St. Michael's Foundation's Translational Innovation Fund.

This story was modified from original article at: [shorturl.at/gmtN5](http://shorturl.at/gmtN5)

*Most of your visit story continued from page 3*

### Bring these to your appointment:

- All your medications in their original containers (also ask your pharmacist to prepare an updated list of all your medications.)
- The doctor needs to review all your medications at each visit.
- Your blood glucose meter and log book. You can also use the upload stations in our waiting room to share your day-by-day blood glucose results with the doctor via an online portal.
- A list of your diabetes medications that need a prescription renewal
- A list of all the questions you may have to ask your doctor

*Practice these simple steps and you are sure to have a meaningful visit with your doctor.*



### Become a Patient and Family Advisor at St. Michael's

You sometimes notice things we don't. Things like how your care is provided, and how we could be doing better. Play a valuable role in helping to ensure the best possible patient experience at St. Michael's.

**Become a Patient and Family Advisor.**

Visit [stmichaelshospital.com/patientandfamilyadvisors](http://stmichaelshospital.com/patientandfamilyadvisors) for more information.

For more information, please contact  
[PatientandFamilyAdvisor@smh.ca](mailto:PatientandFamilyAdvisor@smh.ca)

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