

Healthy eating and a little determination helped Fatima reach remission. Now she helps others avoid Type 2 diabetes.

I thought I felt healthy when I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes about 10 years ago, but I used to get very tired. I weighed 11 stone and my doctor would tell me to lose weight, but I thought 'that's not possible because I love to eat!' One morning, however, I just woke up and thought 'I'm going to start looking after myself'. When I have that determination, there's no stopping me.

I searched online for an app to help me lose weight and found the MyFitnessPal app which was free to download. After entering details about my weight, height and how active I was, the app worked out that I should only consume 1,200 calories a day. By inputting every item I ate, I discovered that some of the food I was eating was extremely calorific and it didn't fill me up at all!



Around that time, I started walking a bit. I'd never been active before, it was always: work, come home tired, eat and sit down. Soon, I was walking 10,000 brisk steps a day.

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I didn't follow a diet but I cut out the 2.5 teaspoons of sugar I took in my tea and started eating smaller portions. Even if I wasn't full, I wouldn't have more. I'd have a handful of nuts instead.

My weight reduced gradually, about 2 to 3 lbs at a time, and my sugar levels were coming down too. After two years, my weight came down to just 8 stone. The doctors reduced my medication to one metformin tablet a day and I started to feel more active.

When I reached my target weight, I was even more active and less tired. I could take my grandchildren to the park and play with them for longer as I had more energy. I had a car and my kids couldn't understand why I was suddenly taking public transport everywhere. I explained that taking the bus meant that I would be able to walk to and from the bus stop. Now, when my husband and I go to the mosque, we park on the road some distance away and then walk the rest of the journey.

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In August 2019, my doctor said that my diabetes was in remission and that I no longer needed to take any medication. People ask me how I did it and I tell them that if they want to get rid of their diabetes, they will have to make some lifestyle changes, like reducing their food portions and staying away from sugar. People also need to realise that besides the sugar intake, some of the carbohydrates in the foods that we eat convert to sugar.

My GP surgery runs a local walking club and, through that, I met Priya who works for Diabetes UK. She asked if I'd like to become a Community Champion and so I now volunteer to raise awareness of diabetes in my local community.

I did a two-day course where I learnt how many people in the UK are affected by diabetes and also how many people are at high risk of developing diabetes but are not aware. In the summer we introduced a walking programme at the mosque. Our OAPs get together once a week and we go for a gentle stroll in order to get people up from their chairs. We also just held a 'Know your Risks' session, with the help of Diabetes UK, to raise awareness at our OAP gathering. Nearly 90 ladies took part and 75% of them discovered that they were at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes with another 10% at medium risk. They were advised to visit their GPs for a blood test.

Today, I can't believe how little I knew about the foods that I was eating all the time. But a little bit of determination, as well as looking at pictures of how I looked before, has made a huge difference to my health.