

9

surprising risk factors for diabetes

By Dan Vierria
MCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

No time for breakfast and too much TV time are among the factors that can raise the risk of diabetes, Fitness magazine reports. In an article in its April issue, the magazine outlines nine surprising risk factors for the disease, which affects about 21 million people in the United States.

Skipping breakfast increases our risk by 30 to 50 percent, according to Fitness, and watching TV for two or more hours a day boosts it by 14 percent.

Pam O'Brien, the magazine's article director, says the main reason for the story was to point out that people can lower their risk of diabetes in about a month.

As a former no-breakfast type, O'Brien began to force herself to eat breakfast a few years ago and has felt much better since.

"So many of us skip breakfast because we're busy and just grab a cup of coffee," she says, describing her own former habit. "It's one of the worst things you can do. People who eat high-fiber cereals respond better to insulin."

According to the American Diabetes Association, diabetes is caused when "the body doesn't produce or properly use insulin."

Insulin converts starches and sugars into fuel for the body.

Although the exact cause is still unknown, the ADA points to

studies that have concluded that genetics and lifestyle factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to be linked to the disease.

O'Brien says her staff based its conclusions and risk factor percentages on university research and other studies and then crunched all of the numbers. Although Fitness magazine targets women, the nine risks also affect men.

The two risk factors that most surprised O'Brien were a large waist (risk increases by 330 percent) and high stress (184 percent).

"All of them were kind of surprising, but how much the waist thing raised your risk surprised me most," O'Brien says. "We're talking the apple-shaped body, fat in the abdomen, fat that is really dangerous."

Using American Heart Association recommendations, women's waistlines should be less than 35 inches. For men, it's less than 40 inches.

"And somehow you don't think of stress as being a factor in diabetes," she says. "When we think of stress, we think of a headache or you can't sleep."

O'Brien's strategy to tackle the nine risk factors is to begin to address two or three and gradually work in more.

"You don't want to feel like you have to change your life all at once," she says.

Diabetes risks

1. Watching two or more hours of TV daily

Raises your risk: 14 percent

How: More TV equals less activity.

The fix: Limit TV to 10 hours a week and exercise more.

2. Drinking one soda a day

Raises your risk: 83 percent

How: Soda adds extra and empty calories, which can easily lead to weight gain.

The fix: Switch to water, diet soda or, even better, unsweetened tea, which may actually protect against disease.

3. Skipping breakfast

Raises your risk: up to 50 percent

How: Not having that morning meal increases the appetite-stimulating hormone ghrelin, making you hungrier and likely to eat more.

The fix: Eat high-fiber cereal with low-fat milk and a half-cup of fruit in the morning. One study of people with prediabetes found that eating high-fiber cereals made their cells respond better to insulin. Consuming dairy products may also cut the risk for insulin resistance by 72 percent.

4. A bout of major depression

Raises your risk: 23 percent

How: Depression may alter body chemistry in a way that makes us more prone to developing diabetes.

The fix: Take a walk. Just 30 minutes, three times a week, has been shown to improve symptoms of depression.

5. A large waist — even if you're at a normal weight

Raises your risk: 330 percent

How: Fat in the abdomen (visceral fat) produces compounds that make cells insulin-resistant. Women should keep their waist size below 35 inches (40 inches for men).

The fix: A half-hour to one hour of cardio, three to five times a week.

6. Waking up in the middle of the night

Raises your risk: 98 percent

How: Not being able to stay asleep means you're not getting enough sleep, making you more prone to developing insulin resistance and leading to diabetes.

The fix: No caffeine in the late afternoon and evening, and no TV or alcohol right before bed. Try yoga, too.

7. Eating fast food more than twice a week

Raises your risk: 100 percent

How: People who ate burgers, fries and soda more than twice a week put on 10 extra pounds and were twice as likely to become resistant to insulin.

The fix: Satisfy fast-food cravings with smaller portions. Try a small burger with no cheese, small fries and a diet soda, for example.

8. High stress

Raises your risk: 184 percent

How: Stress can interfere with your ability to make insulin and process glucose.

The fix: Allow 10 to 15 minutes a day to relax.

9. Consuming lots of processed meat

Raises your risk: 43 percent

How: These meats (such as hot dogs and bacon) are loaded with preservatives that may destroy insulin-producing cells in your pancreas.

The fix: Cut back. A Harvard study found that women who had these meats less often than once a week had the lowest risk. Try a preservative-free type, too.

Source: Fitness magazine, April 2007 issue, www.fitnessmagazine.com.

HOW I DID IT



David Mai takes a Skyrobics class at SkyZone in Chesterfield. Mai has lost more than 40 pounds by exercising on trampolines.

Photos by Sarah Conard

Jumping into better health — feet first

Manchester man uses a trampoline aerobics class and smart eating to help him shed more than 40 pounds

By Harry Jackson Jr.
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Last July, Dave Mai's typical bachelor's night out was to take his niece and nephews to the SkyZone Recreational Center.

SkyZone is a mammoth facility in Chesterfield where children and adults bounce around on connected trampolines, but not just several trampolines. Each room is a big trampoline, several thousand square feet wide, sectioned off into warehouse-size checkerboards.

Mai, 41, took a tour while the children got in the act.

He tried it.

"It just looked like a really fun workout," he says. "What attracted me was their aerobics classes."

He was hooked.

The old life

Mai sells sportswear, works from his home and drives around the region pitching to store owners.

"Which means most of my life is sitting down," he says.

In the past, when he wasn't hanging out with his brother's family, he was at his desk until midnight or in a reclining chair channel-surfing while snacking on Pringles and soda.

Distances to clients often ate up three hours in travel time.

Even when he was playing with his niece and nephews, the recreation was video games.

"Winter only made things worse," Mai says.

Throughout his life, he'd never played much organized athletics, mostly intramural sports and church softball teams.

So his weight inched up over the years. Recognizing himself in the mirror became increasingly difficult. At 5 feet 9 inches tall, 225 pounds was too much to carry. With a body mass index of 33.5, he was 3 points over the line for being obese.

"Not only was I overweight, I felt overweight," Mai says.

His exercise regimen consisted of playing with his brother's children on weekends. He hated jogging; he tolerated walking. And he needed to have fun in his recreation. Boredom produced many a failed experiment.

But most of all, he didn't walk much because he prefers being around people, which probably accounts for his success in sales.

"I don't like to work out alone," he says. "That was something else: I was there with people working for the same goal in the same way.

"I expected it to be a fun workout," he

says of the trampoline. "I jumped with the kids, and I was worn out in 10 minutes."

He hung in for more than two hours.

The center had been open only a couple of weeks. Mai joined the first adult aerobics classes.

Fun

The taste of the trampoline was different.

"It was like flying and walking on the moon," he says.

The first thing the aerobics classes taught him was how out of shape he'd become.

"Jumping up and down on a trampoline doesn't look like much, but after 10 minutes —!"

But the fun and fellowship helped him keep at it. Three weeks later, he was keeping up with the most active members of the classes.

Numerous studies have found that the No. 1 goal killer of exercise is difficulty maintaining motivation.

Experts say that's why avoiding boredom is a big part of staying with a program. About half of adults who start exercising quit within six months.

The big key is fun. Find something that you enjoy doing and do it regardless of what it is or what it looks like.

Mai says his friends often teased him about jumping on trampolines in a recreation center full of children. They don't tease him now.

Mai now weighs 183, with a BMI of 27. While that says he's borderline overweight, he doesn't look it.

His Jack LaLanne physique is anything but fatty, and his inverse-delta back and chest don't show too many extra pounds.

The result isn't unusual.

The official name for trampoline exercise is "rebounding." The source of the name isn't clear; it popped up somewhere between NASA, the U.S. surgeon general and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

Trampoline exercising initially caught the attention of health monitors when people started falling off the sides and hurting themselves.

However, the monitors all eventually agreed that when people didn't try to do flips and fall on their heads, the exercise was even better than jogging — 1,000 calories an hour by some estimates.

A recent surgeon general's report called trampoline exercise a highly beneficial aerobic workout.

The exercise uses every muscle in the body. But even the impact of landing with twice the force of gravity doesn't hurt the joints because of the elasticity of the floor.

The key is that you never stop moving. Even when you're standing, the need for

Dave Mai



Age: 41

Home: Manchester

Occupation: Sales representative

What he did: Discovered trampoline exercise and got himself back into shape.

Quotable: "Find something fun and just stick with it. It's worth it."

A typical day

Breakfast: A bowl of high-fiber cereal — his favorite is Frosted Mini-Wheats — and fruit.

Lunch: A salad with grilled chicken and bottled water.

Dinner: Fish, such as grilled salmon or catfish, with more vegetables and salads on the side.

balance and stability requires energy; walking on the trampoline uses more energy, bouncing uses more energy, and the longer you bounce the more energy you use.

SkyZone solved the danger of falling off the side by eliminating the sides. All of the rooms are padded higher than people can jump, even the kids.

Mai visits three times a week, "... as much as my schedule will allow. It keeps me in good shape for the demands of traveling and the long hours."

Hourlong sessions include jumping jacks (yes, on a trampoline) and "rouncing," a hybrid of running and bouncing around the room.

The weight loss

Friends began to notice his weight dropping by August.

"Then I combined this with a sensible diet," he says. "I was on my own, just common-sense eating: smaller portions, three meals, and then to not eat dinner too late, not past 6 o'clock."

He also cut out a lot of meat. "I saw how I was losing weight without steak and beer and spaghetti, barbecue," he says.

"The first two or three weeks without those things is the worst," he says. "It's a lifestyle change. We're conditioned to eat until we're full."

Even when he orders grilled fish or chicken, "It's a matter of what are they serving with it — baked potatoes?"

He still eats fun restaurant food on special occasions.

"Put the diet aside for special occasions; birthday dinners with the family or dates, I'll eat more normally," he says. "But a full hour of working with the SkyZone aerobics has been as helpful as watching my diet. I couldn't have achieved my results without doing both.

"I just needed to find something fun and addictive. It's a joy, flying around in the air for the better part of an hour.

"And the more weight I lost, the more addictive it became."

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