

Diabetes

On September 2, I had the honor of talking with S.C. Francis about his diabetes. Here's what he had to say:



How long have you been a diabetic and have you run into challenges?

SC: I have been a diabetic for over 10 years. Everyday is a challenge. It can be very difficult when you are out somewhere and it is hard to find healthy choices.

When you first became a diabetic, did it take long to adjust your life?

SC: Yes, there didn't seem to be a lot of information available then about diabetes. I had a hard time figuring out what I was eating that was causing my sugar levels to go up so much. Dr. Breen was the first doctor to really help me start to get control of my sugar levels.

Do you do anything different now?

SC: I count carbohydrates all the time. When I first found out that I was diabetic, I spent most of my time counting sugars, like sweets. Now I know that popcorn makes my sugar go up more than anything. And I like popcorn.

What helped you to take better care of your diabetes?

SC: Understanding what my body does with all the carbohydrate foods that I ate. Realizing that white flour products, potatoes and white rice aren't that good for me. My body just turned those into sugars. Monitoring my sugar levels after I ate different foods has helped me see how all foods affect my sugars. Also seeing how my activity level affected my sugars.

Do you find your diabetes less overwhelming that you used to?

SC: No, because I am now developing the complications. That's another problem that overwhelms me at times. My eye exams are showing that my eyes are getting worse even though my A1C's are going down. (See page 3 for a definition of A1C.) I am a carver. I am an artist, and without my eyes I may as well lose my life. Dr. Breen says that my eyes are getting worse because my blood sugar is higher than it should be too often.

Do you have any advice for the community?

SC: I think that new diabetics should seek out care from a qualified person with a lot of experience with diabetes. Someone that can answer all their questions. I would even like to see a mentoring program get started that puts a new diabetic with a veteran, even if just for support. If I knew 10 years ago what I know now, I would have been much more careful. I didn't realize how much it would damage my nerve endings and my feet. I'm lucky if I can walk 1/2 mile without my feet hurting. I am sad because I am not going to be able to show my grandkids what I think they should learn about our culture. If people have a family history, they should watch for all the symptoms. If they notice any symptoms, they should get checked. **They need to take it seriously!**