

Diabetes Prevention in Action!



On September 15th, I had the honor of talking with John Banks, Director of Natural Resources. Here's what he had to say about his lifestyle changes:

What has made you make a lifestyle change?

JB: It really started about 18 months ago when I received news about my blood work. I had an elevated blood glucose and cholesterol test results. I was so worried when I got that first high blood glucose test result that I had diabetes. This fear made the change easy. My two older siblings and my mother are insulin dependant diabetics. I know that when they were my age, they became diabetic, and I didn't want that to happen to me. I really wanted to take steps now, while I still had time to try and address it without the possibility of going on insulin. So I changed my diet and started to exercise regularly.

What do you do to keep healthy?

JB: I run and bike three times a week for about 30 minutes at a time. I do a lot of cross country skiing in the winter. I lift weights at home 2-3 times per week. I have tried to concentrate on eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods. I keep away from processed and high carbohydrate foods, like sweets. I stopped drinking soda. I used to drink a lot of Coke! I was really shocked to hear that a 12 ounce can of Coke contains about 9 teaspoons of sugar. Since then, I have been able to keep my cholesterol and blood glucose in check for about a year and a half, just by exercising and a healthy diet. I have made a lifelong commitment to health.

What helps you stick with it?

JB: I just feel so much better! With a busy schedule, it is important to get into a routine. I get up early and have a nice healthy breakfast. The key is building this lifestyle into your routine, so eventually it becomes just the way you do things. If I don't stick to my routine, my body tells me that it's time to get out there and run. I start to feel tired and rundown.

Do you have any advice for people trying to make healthy lifestyle changes?

JB: It takes a long-term commitment. Remember that you are not going to get instant results. Sometimes it is tough, but I just look at the long-term consequences of my actions. I think one key is to schedule exercise for the same time everyday. If someone wants to get together, you have it in mind that that time is already taken. Set a schedule and stick to it. And even if you miss a day, or eat something you're not supposed to, it is okay. Just move on to the next day. Don't give up. It is also important to have some support, my family has been great!

I also recommend that people talk to a nutritionist if you do not have the knowledge about what types of food are not good for you. We have a great dietitian right on staff at the health center. She has helped me understand how to read nutrition labels on foods at the grocery store. That has helped me a lot.

I have come to terms with the fact that this is a change for life for me. You just have to take things day by day. Take baby steps and you'll get there.