

Diabetes On-The-Go

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Wednesday, 02 May 2012 12:23

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Growing Industry Helps Diabetics Maintain Active Lifestyles

A whole industry has grown up around freeing diabetics to lead less restricted lives. New on the market, or on the verge of being introduced, are three “firsts”: tubeless insulin pumps, a needleless blood-glucose monitoring system, and diabetic-friendly frozen foods.

With the number of diabetics growing worldwide – 246 million at last count, according to the World Health Organization – businesses are motivated. In 2011, diabetes therapeutic products were a \$23.7 billion dollar industry feeding a growing population that’s starving for a better quality of life, says Chef Robert Lewis, “The Happy Diabetic,” author of two cookbooks for people with the metabolic disorder.

“It wasn’t long ago that Type 1 diabetics had to be sure they packed ample sterile syringes and insulin, whether they were going to work for the day or on a road trip,” he says. “Monitoring blood sugar levels, which is crucial to keeping vital organs healthy, was painful, primitive and hit-or-miss.

“And food? That’s been the hardest. A diabetes diagnosis can feel like a life sentence of bland eating.”

Among the “firsts” Lewis says diabetics can look forward to:

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- The first tubeless insulin pump. Thirty years ago, people with insulin-dependent diabetes had to give themselves shots around the clock to control their blood sugar levels. In some cases, diabetics were hospitalized to ensure they got the insulin necessary to prevent ketoacidosis, a condition that can lead to coma and death. In 1983, the insulin pump was introduced. It attaches to the body and provides continuous insulin injections. But while it was a major breakthrough, it can be bulky and awkward, with a dangling catheter. The most recent innovation is a streamlined version called the OmniPad. It has no tubes, it's smaller and it attaches anywhere on the body with adhesive. It also has a built-in glucose-monitoring system.
- The first needleless glucometer. The Symphony tCGM System uses ultrasound to monitor blood-sugar levels, which will free people from the painful pricks needed to get a small blood sample for testing multiple times a day. The device, which attaches with adhesive to the body, continuously tracks glucose levels day and night and can send the readings to your smart phone. Under development for more than a decade, Symphony is undergoing the studies necessary to win regulatory approval.
- The first diabetic-friendly frozen meals. Meals-in-a-Bun (www.lifestylechefs.net) will arrive in Northeast U.S. grocery stores beginning in July and roll out across the country through the end of the year. They're low on the glycemic index, low in sugar and carbs, high in soluble fiber, low in trans fat, high in lean protein and low in sodium, Lewis says. "And the best thing is, they are delicious." The five varieties – two vegan and three vegetarian – include selections like Thai Satay, mushrooms, broccoli and tofu in whole-wheat flax bun. "This is particularly exciting because, while there have been advances in equipment that makes life easier for diabetics, there haven't been for convenient, packaged foods."

Diabetics who do not watch what they eat may wind up suffering kidney damage, stomach problems, heart disease, pneumonia, gum disease, blindness, stroke, nerve damage, complications during pregnancy, loss of limb and other health problems, according to the CDC.

But many Americans are trending toward healthier diets, eating less meat, gluten, salt and sugar, Lewis says. Tasty foods developed for diabetics will be excellent choices for them, too.

"What's good for diabetics is good for everyone," he says. "And you don't have to give up one

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teaspoon of flavor.

“There’s a reason why I am called ‘The Happy Diabetic’; I have discovered the joy of nutrition-rich food.”

About Lifestyle Chefs

Lifestyle Chefs is a Santa Clara, Calif., company specializing in creating meals inspired by world cuisines and using only natural, healthy and nutritious ingredients. Lifestyle Chefs’ products are all vegetarian and diabetic-friendly, perfect for families who want fast, convenient meals that are low in calories, high in nutrition and robust in flavor. Chef Robert Lewis, “The Happy Diabetic,” was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 1998. He specializes in flavorful recipes that won’t spike a diabetic’s blood sugar.