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## TYPE 2 DIABETES SUCCESS STORY

By Dr. Kerry Graff

Mrs. Bentley weighed nearly 300 pounds and was at her wit's end. I sent her to an endocrinologist for her diabetes several years prior because her sugars were so difficult to control, but she returned to my office that day completely discouraged. Here's how she greeted me:

“My sugars are high, so the endocrinologist increases my insulin. My sugars get better for a few weeks, but then go up again and I have to increase the insulin even more. I'm on over 100 units and four shots a day now! And the insulin causes me to gain more and more weight! The endocrinologist says this is just what happens with diabetes. I hate it!”

In addition to diabetes, she suffered from high blood pressure, heart disease, reflux, degenerative joint disease and neuropathy, which caused a painful burning sensation in her legs. Her medical conditions severely impacted her quality of life. I told her that I recently learned how effective a low fat, whole food, plant-based diet is in treating diabetes and asked her if she wanted to give it a

try. At that point, I think she would have tried just about anything.

I had her take the 4Leaf Survey, and despite the fact that she was following the American Diabetic Association (ADA) diet, she scored only at the *Better Than Most* level. We mapped out a plan for the diet changes I was asking her to make. “But I’ll be eating a lot of carbs! Isn’t that going to make my diabetes worse?” she asked.

KG: “It is counterintuitive, for sure. All these years you have been told to avoid them, and now I’m telling you that you should be eating **mostly** carbs! But this type of diet was shown by Dr. Neal Barnard to reduce sugars three times better than the ADA diet you have been on.

First of all, carbs are not all the same. Good carbohydrates are ones that are as close to the way they come in nature as possible. Our bodies know what to do with those kinds of carbs.

It is the processed carbs—the crackers, white bread, pastries, cakes and candies—that our bodies have no idea how to handle and cause our shoot blood sugars to shoot up. Basically, focus on eating carbs that only have one ingredient on the label. Or better yet, carbs that don’t even need a label!”

In addition, fat in your diet increases insulin resistance. Insulin works like a key to open the door for sugar to get into cells. Fat gums up the lock, making it hard for insulin to do its job. Reducing fat in your diet will help insulin work better.”

**Before she left the office**, I reminded her that the diet changes she was going to make would likely reduce her need for medication (especially for insulin) quickly and

significantly. As such, I told her that she should let her endocrinologist know what she was doing, cut back on insulin per her instructions and continue to check her sugars four times a day, plus anytime she had symptoms. She was due back in a month but was to call or see me sooner for any problems or questions.

Mrs. Bentley was a quick learner and highly motivated. She went right to eating at the 3 to 4Leaf level. Within a week, she called to tell me her systolic blood pressure, which had been 140 when I saw her, had dropped to 90 and she was dizzy. We decreased one of her three blood pressure meds. At her follow-up appointment one month later, she was positively gleeful.

“I feel great! I have so much energy!”

The increased fiber (basically she had increased this 500% by eating 4Leaf) had caused some mild gas and bloating initially, but that had all resolved. She definitely didn't need medication for constipation anymore! She wasn't dizzy, but on exam, her systolic blood pressure was still low, so we reduced her blood pressure medication further. Then I asked her about her sugars:

“I am off over half my insulin already! I can't believe it. I feel better than I have in years. I have my life back! Just by changing what I eat!”

**After years of feeling like a victim of disease, she was now feeling empowered.** Patients have way more control over their health by what they put on their forks than doctors do with the pills and procedures they prescribe. I think that is the biggest realization for all of us.

Mrs. Bentley's story continues. She, like all of us, is a work in progress. As she continues this way of eating, she needs

less medication and her weight comes down. Her joints hurt less. She is able to be more active. Each positive step results in further health improvements. She is no longer on the downward spiral of disease but rather on the upward spiral of regaining her health.

Mrs. Bentley changed the story of her life by adopting a whole food, plant-based diet. You can too!

**My thoughts about the ADA Diet.** Mentioned earlier, that's the one recommended by the American Diabetes Association for "managing your disease." Here's why I don't think that diet is such a good idea.

Let's begin with the three macronutrient sources for calories: carbohydrates, fats and protein. When you eat less from one source, you need to eat a higher percentage of the others to get adequate calories to fuel your body. In the ADA diet, where carbohydrates are highly restricted to control blood sugars, a large percentage of the calories come from fat and protein.

Is it any wonder that most diabetics don't die from uncontrolled sugars but rather from heart disease (related to the fat they ingest) and kidney disease (related to their animal protein intake)? Honestly, what good is sugar control to a diabetic if they have a heart attack or their kidneys fail?

The good news is that 4Leaf eating is good for almost everything--except for keeping your doctor in business!