



Monday 4 April 2016

### **World Health Day: Dawn 4 Diabetes in the Far North**

As the World Health Organisation (WHO) places the focus on diabetes this World Health Day (Thursday 7 April 2016), many Northlanders will be waking to ongoing management of the disease all day, every day.

World Health Day kicks off around the globe with New Zealand – one of the first countries to see daylight – and Healthy Families Far North and Diabetes New Zealand are using the opportunity to raise awareness of the disease which affects almost 12,000 Northlanders.

For Kaitaia-based Gloria Keepa (47), Rose Peri-Graham (57) and Anesa Toia (39), diabetes features significantly in their daily lives. The women were diagnosed from one to five years ago and each has had to adjust to various degrees since.

Anesa confesses nurses “have had to play rock, scissors and paper to decide which one will ring” her, due to her reluctance to undertake regular medical checks. However, when she began to present with skin conditions that weren’t healing properly a year ago, she visited her GP and was subsequently tested and diagnosed.

Her experience has seen her change prescribed medication, but she also uses traditional rongoa Maori in the form of kohekohe, which flushes the blood system.

Similarly, Gloria cleanses her system using kumarahou and karakia, enhanced by making subsequent changes to her diet and activity levels.

“I had to cut down on my carbs and I drink more water with meals, which is something I never used to do. I’ve even started boot camp – but quitting smoking was a major deal for me,” she says of the changes she has implemented since receiving her diagnosis.

For Rose, the changes have been slow and gradual. Like Gloria, the tiredness she was experiencing prior to being diagnosed was becoming problematic: “I didn’t know at the time that tiredness was one of the side effects. I only went to the doctors if there was something I could see and I was so busy – I just didn’t think about it,” she says.



Rose says she had two misconceptions about her initial diagnosis. Firstly, that she would have to take insulin and secondly, that it was caused by eating too many sweets, although she is not a fan of sugary foods.

These misconceptions have since been dispelled as she is – to date – not taking insulin as part of her medication regime. She has also learned to eliminate or reduce the parts in her diet that were having a detrimental effect.

“For me, the biggie was cream. Eggs in cream, fish in cream – I always had a two-litre container of cream in my fridge. I’m not going to lie and say I don’t eat cream anymore but there’ll just be a small bottle of cream in my fridge instead!” she says.

All three women have Type 2 diabetes, which is where the body either doesn’t produce enough insulin or the cells in the body don’t recognise the insulin that is present. For many people, making health choices and staying active are highly effective in disease management.

There are numerous symptoms of Type 2 diabetes, including feeling tired and lacking energy, feeling thirsty, going to the toilet frequently, getting infections frequently, poor eyesight or blurred vision and often feeling hungry.

Diabetes New Zealand is raising awareness this World Health Day via an online event around the country which is encouraging people to take a group photo at local landmarks and upload them to social media with the hashtag #dawn4diabetes.

For more information on diabetes, visit [www.diabetes.org.nz](http://www.diabetes.org.nz).