

Staying Healthy for Those You Love



Living with type 2 diabetes is not easy. Once type 2 diabetes develops it remains a chronic condition that requires immediate intervention and ongoing care. The modifications required to manage the condition can severely impact you and those closest to you. The adjustments can leave you with feelings of guilt and believing you may become a burden to your family. McAllen City Commissioner, Jose “Pepe” Cabeza de Vaca, a type 2 diabetic shared his feelings about managing his condition. “I want to be healthy for my family. I don’t want to be a burden for them or my 5-year-old son.”

The father of four was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes over 13 years ago. “I was enjoying a Vipers basketball game with my friends when I started seeing blurry. I thought maybe I was just tired.” Pepe’s blurry vision and other common symptoms developed and continued for several weeks. Although his mother encouraged him to seek medical attention, he believed his symptoms would improve within time. Pepe later learned his A1C was dangerously above 12% indicating insulin resistance and difficulty regulating glucose levels. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) states an A1C above 9% increases the risk of long-term diabetes and complications like blindness, nerve damage, and kidney failure.¹



Initial interventions for Pepe were difficult to maintain so he later opted for Bariatric surgery, a procedure performed to change your digestive system and help you lose weight. The surgery is minimally invasive and commonly used to treat type 2 diabetes. The procedure helped Pepe lose over 100 pounds. He was gradually taken off medications for his condition. However, studies have shown approximately 50% of bariatric patients gain weight within 24 months after surgery.²

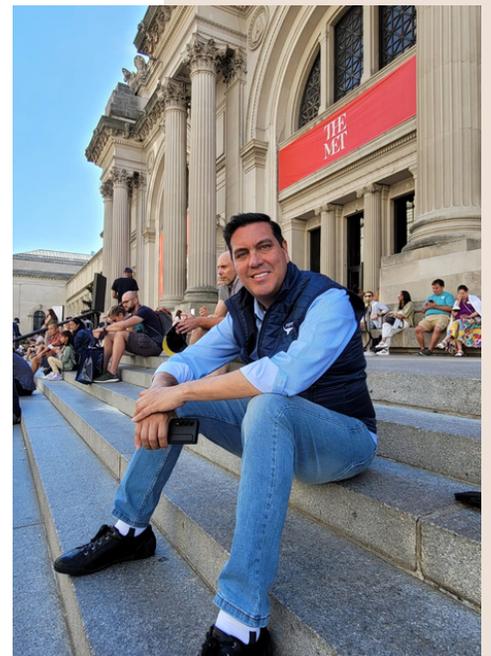
Pepe's former habits resurfaced and caused him to gain weight. "You start feeling comfortable and begin eating things you are not supposed to" Pepe explained, "My diabetes returned, not as aggressive but it came back." Soon thereafter Pepe was once again prescribed medications to help him manage his diabetes.

Throughout the years Pepe has learned to manage diabetes with a strong mindset and consciousness to choose healthier habits. "Work on your mindset. You must admit you need help and put your own part. We may have the guidance of our doctor but if we don't follow it, it doesn't matter." For Pepe the idea of becoming a burden to his family is what helps him maintain healthier habits. "I know my family worries for me, so I want to give them peace of mind."

Following recommendations by his doctor, Pepe has added physical activity to his routine. Pepe admitted at times it can seem like a challenge but has found a successful regimen. "Exercise does not mean a gym. If you put a pair of tennis shoes in the car, you can put them on for a quick walk when you get home. Set a 15-minute timer and walk. As soon as the timer goes off, walk back the same path and you're done for the day." Pepe believes if you keep habits simple and easy its more appealing. Regarding meals, Pepe has worked on managing his portions. "If you want to have taquitos *mexicanos*, eat one or two to kick the craving and compliment your meal with other nutritious additions like avocado and vegetables." With these lifestyle adjustments Pepe hopes to gradually eliminate medications from his treatment. His goal is to be the best version of himself and reflect good habits unto his 5-year-old son, Pepito. "With each year that goes by, we're not getting any younger. *No se cuanto voy a durar*, but I want to be a good example for my kids and do things right. If I am healthier, I can give a lot more to those that I love."



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1. American Diabetes Association Professional Practice Committee
https://diabetesjournals.org/care/article/45/Supplement_1/S171/138925/2-Classification-and-Diagnosis-of-Diabetes
2. Magro DO; Geloneze B; Delfini R; Pareja BC; Callejas F; Pareja JC; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18392907/>