



The Peak of Fitness

JEREMY JENNINGS learned from a very young age that the best way to tackle a problem is head-on. He was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of 13, and he quickly took responsibility for his blood sugar and managing his insulin levels.

“The first day I found out about my diabetes, a nurse came in with a needle and syringe and asked if I wanted to give myself a shot. I remember thinking that I can put this off or do it now. It was going to be part of my life from then on, so I decided to go for it.”

Diabetes isn't Jeremy's only health condition. He also has celiac disease and began suffering from chronic pain at 17, which is rare for someone that age. His pain was bad enough that he couldn't attend his senior year of high school. When he made it to college, Jeremy was still suffering with severe pain every day. One day, his roommate invited him to go rock climbing at a local gym. Little did he know how much that invitation would change his life forever—and for the better.

“I started going once a week for 30 minutes at a time, but then I'd be in three hours of terrible pain. I decided that if I was going to be in pain anyway, at least I could earn it,” says Jeremy. “I started seeing strength improvements and progression that kept me going. One unique thing about rock climbing is that you can legitimately see week-to-week gains.”



JEREMY

JENNINGS

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FUN FACT

Jeremy is a musician who has been playing guitar and singing since the 7th grade.



A Real Breakthrough

A few months later, some friends Jeremy had made in the gym invited him to go outdoor rock climbing for the first time. During the climb, he was struggling and in so much pain that he asked his friends to let him down. They said no. Turns out Jeremy had what it took to finish that climb, and something changed inside him that day.

“It really helped me shift my mindset and come to accept that I'm going to be in some pain, but there is hope. After that day, I started pushing a little harder and pursuing the sport even more,” remembers Jeremy. “And after a little more than a year, my baseline pain retreated and was much more tolerable than it had been in years.”

HOW DO YOU PERSEVERE?

Rock climbing has continued to be Jeremy's preferred method of exercise and passion for the last 8½ years. He's made his best friends in life—and even met his wife, Nicole—through climbing. In April 2017, he fulfilled a longtime dream of going on vacation to the international climbing destination of Kalymnos, Greece. Jeremy, Nicole, and two friends spent 12 days climbing and exploring near the Aegean Sea.

"The improvement in my overall health has been amazing. I've significantly reduced my medication for chronic pain—and a little pain while climbing gives me something to fight against," Jeremy explains. "It's hard to tell someone who's in pain that they need to exercise and keep moving, but it's true. I'd encourage anyone to not let fear keep them from trying something new and to listen to the people who are trying to help you. In my case it was some 18-year-old guys that wouldn't let me off that cliff. Looking back, I can't imagine where I'd be without them and their unwillingness to let me quit."



Jeremy in Greece



Jeremy and his wife, Nicole



How to
Exercise Safe
& Smart

INSULIN AND EXERCISE— TIPS FOR STAYING ACTIVE AND SAFE WITH DIABETES

While climbing, Jeremy also has to keep his insulin levels in mind. Moderate exercise—like walking or swimming—gets your heart rate up and causes your muscles to use more glucose. With prolonged exercise, this can lower blood sugar levels. Over time, it can make the insulin in your body work better and even lower your A1C. What's more, the benefits of exercise last hours after you work up a sweat.

According to the American Diabetes Association®, people with Type 1 diabetes are at greatest risk of hypoglycemia—often called low blood sugar—that can cause heart palpitations, sweating, anxiety, confusion, seizures, and loss of consciousness if not treated quickly.

To prevent exercise-related hypoglycemia, follow these tips:

- + Check your blood sugar before and immediately after exercise.
- + Avoid alcohol prior to or immediately after exercise.
- + Hot tubs, saunas, and steam rooms should be avoided directly after exercise because they keep your heart rate up longer.
- + Limit exercise sessions to one or two per day. More sessions increase the likelihood of a blood sugar drop.
- + Complete any physical activity at least two hours before bed.

"We know that activity helps regulate blood sugar and metabolism, and people with diabetes should pay close attention to how their blood sugar responds to exercise. That means I check mine right before and after my climb," says Jeremy. "I also make sure to have snacks with me and drink plenty of water—I never want another climber to feel uncomfortable about a dangerous drop in my blood sugar."