

# WHA Virtual Series “RealTalk With the Experts”

Understanding and Reversing Diabetes, Heart Disease,  
and Most Chronic Illnesses



## Question & Answer Session

Speaker: Allan Hatch, MD

Questions	Answers
Chronic Illness Reversal	
<b>1. Explain the difference between prediabetes and diabetes.</b>	The American Diabetes Association defines “prediabetes” as having a HgA1c (a blood test that gives a 2-3-month average of your blood sugar readings) in the 5.7-6.4% range. A HgbA1c of 6.5% or higher is diagnostic for type II diabetes. It is importance that if your primary care provider suggest you have prediabetes or borderline diabetes to take steps such as exercising more and eating a healthy diet to lower your risk of developing diabetes. Remember to make your calories count with nutritious foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
<b>2. What does it mean when a person is told they are pre-diabetic?</b>	Pre-diabetes is associated with a HgbA1c in the 5.7-6.4% range. This is a blood test that your health care provider can order that gives an average of your blood sugar readings for the past two-three months. Other test that might be ordered include fasting plasma glucose (another blood test)- average range is 100-125 mg/dL. Some providers may order a 2-hour postprandial glucose (two hours after eating a meal) and the normal range for this is 140-199 mg/dL in prediabetics. As noted in the answer to the first question- it is important to make lifestyle changes including exercising and eating a healthier diet to reduce your chance of developing diabetes.
<b>3. How do you find a balance between exercise and diet to reverse diabetes &amp; eliminate diabetes medicine/insulin?</b>	Reversing diabetes can mean that you no longer must take medication and that glucose “blood sugar” is well controlled with diet and exercise. In terms of reversing blockage with prudent lifestyle modification there is the potential to reverse plaque formation in the arteries.
<b>4. To reverse diabetes, what specific steps do you take?</b>	As outlined in some of the answers to previous questions- the fundamentals to improving blood sugar control start with eating a healthy diet. Pay attention to portion sizes and try to fill up on healthy carbohydrates such as fruits,

	<p>vegetables, and whole grains. For most people with type II diabetes, weight loss can help your body more easily control blood sugar levels. Exercising for the recommended 150-180 minutes of moderate cardiovascular activity a week will help stabilize blood sugar readings by helping with weight loss.</p>
<p><b>5. If diabetes is reversed can it return?</b></p>	<p>With significant lifestyle modification including diet changes and exercise- type II diabetes can go into remission and no longer require medication. It is still important to remember that type II diabetes is an ongoing disease which means if you do not take steps to control your blood sugar levels- symptoms can return.</p>
<p><b>6. I heard once you are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes your numbers/levels will never return to normal, so there is no reversing it. You can control it, but you will always be diabetic. Is this true?</b></p>	<p>It is important that even if you are no longer taking medication to normalize your blood sugar readings that you inform your healthcare providers of diagnosis of diabetes. As noted in the question above- there is always a chance that symptoms will return and that blood sugar levels will start to raise especially if the steps to lower blood sugar-diet, exercise, weight loss, are not being continued. It is possible to go into remission, but still prudent to discuss with your healthcare provider appropriate monitoring including periodic glucose checks or HgA1c lab.</p>
<p><b>7. What are the keys to reducing inflammation in a person? Especially regarding cancer. First time hearing "cancer loves inflammation" that is a powerful statement!</b></p>	<p>Eating a healthy mainly plant based diet, exercising regularly, and reducing stress have been proven to reduce chronic inflammation.</p>
<p>Pre-Diabetes</p>	
<p><b>8. Are there signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes before its diagnosis?</b></p>	<p>Symptoms you may experience with type II diabetes include frequent urination-sometimes at night, increased thirst, increased hunger, blurry vision, tingling or numbness in hands and feet, fatigue or lack of energy, but in some cases there may be no symptoms at all. If you have a family history of diabetes, it is important to discuss this with your health care provider and determine appropriate screening test.</p>
<p>Holistic Approaches</p>	
<p><b>9. Are there any natural herbs that one could use to help with type II diabetes? Also, what would a weekly regimen be for taking natural herbs each day of the</b></p>	<p>The best way to “naturally” lower blood sugar readings is to adhere to a portion controlled, low fat, fiber rich diet that mainly includes vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Moderate cardiovascular exercise such as walking for 30</p>

<p><b>week? Are there supplements to prevent diabetes?</b></p>	<p>minutes at least 5 days a week will help maintain a healthy weight.</p>
<p><b>10. What are ways without medication to get your A1c below 7.7?</b></p>	<p>As outlined in previous questions- weight loss, diet, and exercise are the best ways to lower your blood sugar levels without taking additional medication. Weight loss through a portion-controlled diet rich in nutrients from fruit and vegetables as well as exercising regularly will help improve your body’s ability to control glucose levels. Meeting with a registered dietician when trying to lose weight with a history of diabetes is recommended to help you best reach your health goals.</p>
<p><b>11. Friends have recommended Soursop leaves as an effective health tonic for high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, etc. My primary doctor does not recommend the soursop leaves or tonic. Are the speakers aware of soursop and if so, what are their comments around use of the product?</b></p>	<p>Soursop is high in Vitamin C and has antioxidant benefits which can boost immune health. It is important to remember though that our diet should include nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables and that often times supplements include a very concentrated amount of a nutrient that would be unnatural to a healthy diet- for example, one would not eat 37 bananas in one day so taking a pill that is the equivalent of this can interact with other medications. Eating a healthy, balanced diet that includes a variety of healthy carbohydrates is the best way to avoid chronic diseases by reducing inflammation.</p>
<p><b>12. What are the best natural ways to reduce blood pressure and bad cholesterol levels?</b></p>	<p>Avoiding unhealthy carbohydrates such as foods or drinks with added fats, sugars, and high sodium is the best way to naturally reduce blood pressure and control cholesterol with diet. It is important to avoid or limit foods like hot dogs, sodas, sweetened breakfast cereals or snacks, fries, and chips. These foods typically are high in sodium. Be sure to be mindful of portion size and instead choose whole grain options and fruits and vegetables high in fiber. Weight loss can help lower blood pressure. Sometimes even losing as little as 10 lbs. can help lower blood pressure readings. Regular exercise can lower stress levels, help with weight loss, and improve blood pressure readings as well.</p>
<p><b>13. Is there a specific daily calorie count for people with diabetes?</b></p>	<p>Daily calorie count depends on several factors including age, gender, activity level, current weight, and body style. Generally, anywhere from 1,500 to 1,800 calorie diet per day to promote weight loss is recommended but it is</p>

	<p>importance to speak with a registered dietician or your healthcare provider about an appropriate daily calorie count specific to your daily metabolic needs.</p>
<p><b>14. How does a plant-based diet fit in to reversing illnesses? Is there a physician that practices prescribing plant-based recipes and shopping lists? Have you ever seen the documentary <i>Fork Over Knives</i>?</b></p>	<p>Great question! The documentary <i>Forks Over Knives</i> and there is some great information regarding the benefits of plant-based diets. Plant based diets can help improve blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels by limiting sodium, increasing fiber intake, and providing important nutrients to boost immune system and reduce inflammation. Plant based diets are a great way to lose weight while still getting the daily nutrients you need. Weight loss typically helps improve blood pressure and blood sugar readings. Additionally, reading Dr. Ornish's book <i>UnDo it! How Simple Lifestyle changes can Reverse Most Chronic Diseases</i>.</p>
<p><b>15. I was recently diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and would like to know any information available about diet/nutrition or other ways to manage the disease other than medication. I do not want to be medication dependent, but currently take a mild immunosuppressant.</b></p>	<p>Including anti-inflammatory foods that are high in omega 3 fatty acids can help reduce inflammation throughout your body. Foods that are high in omega 3 fatty acids include salmon, tuna, walnuts, and almonds. Also, be sure to include dietary antioxidants in your diet especially vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E. Drinking green tea and eating fresh fruits and vegetables are great ways to get the most nutrients from your diet. It is important to follow the recommendations of your healthcare provider- while diet and exercise can help, medication does have an important role in treating this disease.</p>
<p><b>16. What is the current nutrition program recommended for diabetic patients?</b></p>	<p>Meeting with a registered dietician is the best way to develop a dietary program that suits your metabolic needs best- differences in gender, underlying health issues, weight and several other factors can make differences in your overall calorie intake goal. Make sure to focus on a diet that includes lean protein, low fat dairy, whole grains, and plenty of vegetables.</p>
<p><b>17. What fruits should be eliminated in your diet if you are a Type 2 Diabetic?</b></p>	<p>Portion control is an important aspect to be mindful of if you are eating fruit and you have a diagnosis of diabetes. For example, half a medium banana and four oz of tangerines are appropriate portion sizes of these fruits if you have diabetes. There are certain fruits you can eat more of- 1 cup of blackberries, 1 and ¼ cup</p>

	<p>of strawberries are appropriate portion sizes as well. Also, how the fruit is prepared is another important factor to keep in mind- pineapple is rich in nutrients but can be high on the glycemic index. Fresh pineapple is a better option than canned or dried pineapple.</p>
<p><b>18. What about intermittent fasting, does it work and how to do it?</b></p>	<p>Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern that cycles between periods of fast and periods of eating- one common method includes restricting you're eating period to 8 hours a day and then fasting for 16 hours in between. People with underlying medical issues such as diabetes need to discuss this with their healthcare provider or registered dietician prior to starting such a stringent diet. We recommend eating healthy, balanced, portion control minded meals throughout the day to help your body obtain the nutrients it needs to function.</p>
<p><b>19. What about using Manuka Honey, propolis/manuka honey lozenges, elderberry, homeopathic products such as oscillococcinum by Boiron, do they work?</b></p>	<p>During the <a href="#">webinar</a> we discussed supplements and herbs some- overall consensus was that although these supplements can have some benefit, it is more important to focus on a well-balanced diet and regular cardiovascular exercise program. There is no magic pill or quick fix that can replace consistent exercise and daily commitment to eating a variety of vegetables and fruits that can provide our body with the anti-inflammatory benefits and nutrients it needs.</p>
<p><b>20. What is the role of digestive health in diabetes? How would the lack of a colon contribute to the diabetic condition?</b></p>	<p>Uncontrolled blood sugars can cause nerve damage- including the nerves in your stomach and intestines. Gastroparesis is the result of the vagus nerve being damaged and can lead to delayed gastric emptying which can cause stomach pain, vomiting, and nausea. As far as specific medical conditions- it is important to discuss your specific medical issues with your healthcare provider who has access to your medical information and results to receive the most accurate information.</p>
<p><b>21. Why does insulin resistance occur? How can it be prevented naturally?</b></p>	<p>Insulin resistance is when the cells in your fat, muscles, and liver stop responding appropriately to insulin and stop being able to use glucose from your blood for energy. This results in the pancreas making more and more insulin to compensate. Over time this increases your blood sugar levels. Smoking cessation,</p>

	maintaining a healthy weight by engaging in regular cardiovascular exercise, eating a diet that limits rice, white bread, and pasta will help lower your risk of developing insulin resistance.
<b>22. Knowing that exercise is important, but what type of exercise is available for people with chronic back problems due to herniated discs? Person also has a loss of cartilage in their knees.</b>	Some exercise options for people with chronic pain can include stationary bicycles, walking laps in a swimming pool, and using arm ergometers while sitting. Swimming in a pool is highly recommended for people with chronic back pain due to alleviating pressure on your joints.
<b>23. When we think about exercising enough for it to be considered "good", is there a recommendation or can you clarify what "good" is?</b>	The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week or 75 minutes of high intensity aerobic exercise per week. Walking at a fairly brisk pace for 30 minutes 5 days a week is a great way to meet that 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week goal.
<b>24. Are there any health benefits to taking Irish sea moss, Elderberry tea, curcumin etc?</b>	As mentioned above in some of the previous questions- we do not recommend any specific supplements or herbs, but rather encourage a diet rich in a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
<b>25. My question is as some say too much of a good thing can be just as bad. Is there a such thing with vegetables?</b>	It is important to focus on balanced, portion-controlled diet which includes a variety of vegetables and fruits. By eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, you can ensure you are getting all of the nutrients you need. <a href="#">Check out the American Heart Association's guidelines on suggested servings sizes and number of servings daily.</a>
<b>Comorbidities</b>	
<b>26. If you have had pancreatic cancer, how does diabetes affect your body? Is it possible to get blood sugars under control?</b>	This is an important discussion to have with your healthcare provider as there are specifics such as whether your diabetes developed because of pancreatic cancer or did you have diabetes for several years before developing pancreatic cancer. Type3c diabetes is caused by disorders in the pancreas such as cancer and are different from having type II diabetes. The way your diabetes needs to be managed will depend on your past medical history as mentioned above. While exercise and eating a well-balanced diet of fruits and vegetables while limiting sodas, pasta, white rice, red meat can help lower blood sugar- it is important to

	discuss this with your healthcare provider for the best recommendations for you.
<b>27. Is there any link between diabetes and other conditions, like Lupus or thyroid issues?</b>	Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) patients have increased risk of developing insulin resistance which also puts them at a higher risk of developing diabetes. SLE is also associated with early atherosclerosis and cardiovascular diseases. Thyroid disease and diabetes are believed to have some connection. Too much or too little of insulin can affect thyroid hormone production and activity.
<b>28. Can having a thyroid problem lead to many of the diseases your talking about.</b>	Thyroid disease can lead to some cardiac issues such as palpitations or heart racing/ fluttering and some thyroid issues can cause weight gain which can lead to some of the diseases. Eating a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight and knowing your numbers regarding blood pressure and blood sugar are good ways to protect your heart when you have other medical issues.
<b>29. I am an HS patient. I got diagnosed about 6 years ago. You mentioned chronic inflammation and I was wondering if HS (being a chronic inflammatory disease) could be connected to some of these other illnesses that you spoke of?</b>	There is research that patients hidradentitis suppurativa (HS) have an increased risk of diabetes (nearly 3x increased risk). Obesity and smoking are also risk factors. HS is correlated with many chronic inflammatory conditions metabolic syndrome and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).
<b>Heart Health</b>	
<b>30. What health changes can I make to get off blood pressure medicine for good?</b>	Great question! The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is an eating plan that focuses on reducing blood pressure by eating foods that are low in fat and cholesterol and encourage eating more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy. Losing weight can also help decrease your blood pressure. Be sure to review the <a href="#">National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure</a> that gives more information about the DASH eating plan, what a healthy weight is for you given your age and height, as well as exercise recommendations.
<b>31. Hypertension and heart disease run in my family on both sides. As a 60-year-old, what can I do to prevent developing high blood pressure and other related heart diseases?</b>	With a family history of hypertension and heart disease, it is important to know your numbers- blood pressure, blood sugar (glucose), and cholesterol levels. These numbers will help you and your healthcare provider assess what areas you need to focus on depending on your

	<p>results. For any individual though but especially those with family history of heart disease, it is never too early to implement a heart healthy lifestyle of exercising regularly and possible look into the DASH eating plan as well for dietary recommendations.</p>
<p><b>32. In addition to my blood pressure and cholesterol levels, what should I watch for?</b></p>	<p>It is important to also have your blood sugar levels checked at least once a year by your healthcare provider. If you have a family history of diabetes- be sure to discuss this with your healthcare provider as it may prompt more frequent blood sugar checks or what type of blood test they check your blood sugar with- hemoglobin A1c testing vs. fasting glucose testing.</p>
<p><b>33. As a 54-year-old, if I notice the thinning of your blood is extreme from a daily 81mg Aspirin, should I stop the aspirin, that my doctor started me on to reduce my heart disease risk?</b></p>	<p>This is an important discussion to have with your healthcare provider as there are certain risk factors for developing heart disease your provider might be concerned for and before stopping any medication, it is important to discuss this with your healthcare provider. Discussing the pros/cons of aspirin therapy given your past medical history and family history would be beneficial.</p>
<p><b>34. What age should you have your children tested for cardiomyopathy? My son had a VSD repair as an infant. Although it's repaired, could any complications occur throughout his life?</b></p>	<p>If he is having any concerning symptoms such as worsening shortness of breath on exertion, palpitations, or chest pain, it is important to let your healthcare provider know of these symptoms so that they can be evaluated soon. The risk for long term complications from VSD repair later in life are low- but if he is having any of the symptoms mentioned above, he should see a cardiologist for further evaluation including echocardiogram which is a noninvasive procedure that can look at the chambers of the heart.</p>
<p><b>35. What is the normal range for CRP that doctors test for?</b></p>	<p>This can vary depending on the lab. Typically, a CRP value less than 3 mg/L is average. If value is &gt;10 mg/L indicates a probable chronic infection.</p>
<p><b>36. Are there tests we can request from our primary physician to check for excess inflammation and plaque buildup? What is your opinion of taking a liquid tumeric supplement?</b></p>	<p>Blood test that can evaluate excess inflammation including ESR or CRP. This is an important conversation to have with your primary care physician if you have autoimmune disorders. As far as plaque build up there is no specific test to evaluate this. There</p>

	<p>are options such as stress test that can evaluate your hearts ability to function under stress. In regard to liquid turmeric there are anti-inflammatory benefits with turmeric but it is important to make sure there are no interactions with your medication. Be sure to tell your healthcare providers which supplements you are taking.</p>
<p>Diabetes Treatment</p>	
<p><b>37. What (if any) is available for neuropathy? Are there any other medications available that serve the same purpose? I have been taking Metformin for over 10 years and am taking 5 pills a day, 500mg.</b></p>	<p>Without knowing your medical history and previously tried medications, it is difficult for to suggest other medications as you may have contraindications for those given other medical issues. If you are struggling with neuropathy, be sure to let your healthcare provider know and see if changes can be made to your diet and medical regimen that can help you get better control of blood sugar readings.</p>
<p><b>38. Should I be taking metformin ER for diabetes type II and insulin?</b></p>	<p>Specific answers cannot be given in regards to your medical regimen, the combination of insulin and metformin has associated benefits including decreased weight gain associated with insulin alone, less “low blood sugar” episodes compared with insulin alone, and typically result in a lower insulin dose. Be sure to review medication with your healthcare provider.</p>
<p><b>39. What are your thoughts about Metformin and the articles that have come out about its safety?</b></p>	<p>Metformin is an established treatment for diabetes with a good safety profile. Although there has been some concern regarding NDMA in Metformin, it is important to note it was voluntarily recalled and it is the extended-release metformin. FDA continues to recommend patients take ER metformin until a doctor or pharmacist gives them a replacement or different treatment options. FDA testing has not shown NDMA in immediate release metformin products which is the most commonly prescribed.</p>
<p><b>40. Diabetes runs in my family and I have been told I was on the borderline. What current medicines on the market should and should not be used?</b></p>	<p>With a diagnosis of borderline diabetes, significant lifestyle modification including weight loss if applicable, exercising, and adhering to a diet low in fat and calories and rich in vegetables and fruits. As far as specific medication goes, this depends on what your numbers are (fasting glucose and Hemoglobin</p>

	A1c %) and we recommend discussing this with your healthcare provider.
<p><b>41. How do I balance diabetes, insulin, and weight gain/ loss?</b></p>	<p>Meeting with a registered dietician who can help you develop a specific eating plan with your weight, other health conditions, and healthcare goals in mind is a great way to make sure you are losing weight in a healthy manner while still meeting your nutritional needs. Be sure to pay attention to serving sizes and how many servings of a particular food group are recommended in a day. If you are trying to lose weight, meeting with a dietician to help set a daily calorie intake goal is another good way to make sure you are providing your body with the vitamins it needs while still being mindful of portion sizes. Daily calorie intake goals are very specific to your weight, activity level, and other health issues such as kidney disease so be sure to speak with your healthcare provider about finding a plan right for you!</p>
<p>Stress Management</p>	
<p><b>42. Can you provide information about what types of interventions work the best for stress management (VR, meditation (what type of meditation), hypnosis etc.)?</b></p>	<p>Regarding which form of stress management works the best for stress, I think that depends on the individual. In our clinic, we focus more on meditation for stress management for our cardiac rehabilitation program. Meditation encompasses a variety of techniques with some focusing more on stillness and mindfulness such as Mantra meditation, guided meditation, or mindfulness meditation while others combine meditation with physical movement and breathing exercises such as Qi gong, Yoga, and Tai Chi. Don't be afraid to try different types of meditation and see which one works best for you and that you enjoy.</p>
<p><b>43. Should people take Melatonin long-term? If they do will it inhibit natural melatonin production? What are some natural supplements for relaxing (Rhodiola rhozea, valerian root etc) and do they work?</b></p>	<p>Short term use of melatonin supplements appears safe for most people, but there is not significant data on the long-term safety of taking melatonin. With any dietary supplement it is important to remember that the regulations for dietary supplements are different and less strict than those for prescription drugs. Natural does not always mean safe so talking with your healthcare provider about using supplements is always a smart decision. If you struggle with falling asleep or staying asleep- consider stress</p>

	management techniques discussed in question 42.
<b>44. Can you recommend reputable companies for supplements, stress management, nutrition etc.?</b>	I encourage you to read the answer for question 42 for recommendations for different forms of stress management. Researching and finding a good fit for you is important so that you will enjoy the activity and likely be more consistent with practicing it. As far as supplements and nutrition goes, we do not recommend any specific supplements and instead recommend eating a healthy, balanced diet rich in vegetables and fruits.
<b>Health Equity</b>	
<b>45. Do you feel if more health professionals considered cultural differences within their patients would there be a decrease in contraction/morbidity with these chronic illnesses?</b>	Yes, I do agree that if more healthcare providers were aware of differences or issues within the culture of their patients, there would be less barriers between patients and providers. I have been fortunate to have patients that educate me when certain medications or things I prescribe or want them to do, do not agree with their culture beliefs or they do not have access to financially. I appreciate when they let me know so that we can work together as a team to come up with a solution. I think it is important providers and patients work together and have a relationship of trust.
<b>46. How can we in the community help to educate and empower others to become advocates to defeat these chronic diseases that plague our community?</b>	Engaging in activities such as Heart Month and Diabetes Month by planning community education activities that not only involve local healthcare providers but other community members as well such as restaurant owners, gym owners, churches, etc., that can motivate and help distribute education and information to a broader audience is a great way to encourage individuals to become their own health advocates and not be afraid to ask questions and empower them to take charge of their health.