

**TYPE 1**

‘We’re no  
different,  
JUST A LITTLE  
*sweeter*,’



**Deb Ludeke, 41**, ran the length of Tasmania to raise money for kids with type 1 – and show the world that people with diabetes can do anything!

**You’ve just run 205km in 3.5 days. How are you feeling?**

Fantastic, except that my feet are so sore, I can’t put them on the ground! Some people say that the track from Launceston to Hobart is all downhill on the map, but I can assure you it’s not.

I nearly did an all-nighter on the second-last day because I was concerned I was taking too long, so I’m also feeling a bit sleep deprived. I made it, though, and I only had one low the whole time. All credit goes to my insulin pump, because without that, the run wouldn’t have happened.

We ended up raising thousands of dollars for my type 1 charity, Kms4Kids, which will go towards helping children with type 1 learn to manage their condition.

**Why were you so keen to raise money for kids with type 1?**

I wanted to show kids what you can do when you have type 1. I was diagnosed when I was 10 and I remember being told that I couldn’t go in the athletics carnival. Luckily, Dad went to the school and sorted them out!

Throughout my life, I’ve known people who didn’t understand diabetes very well. I remember trying to hide that I had diabetes when I was in my late teens. I’ve had jobs where I didn’t tell anyone I had it. So I also want to teach kids that diabetes is nothing to be ashamed of. We’re no different, we’re just a little bit sweeter.

**Describe your diabetes journey.**

I’ve had a lot of ups and downs with diabetes. My blood glucose

levels (BGLs) were low the whole time I was pregnant with my son Lachlan, who is now nine, and my diabetes educators could never tell me why. Even though I was on injections, Lachlan wasn’t getting enough sugar and I had an ambulance at my house three or four times each week. In the end, Lachlan was born six weeks early and he weighed less than 2.7 kilos.

That was bad, but things got a lot worse when I became a single mum and decided to take up marathon running. I’d had a gutful of having diabetes and so I got to a point where I just ignored it. I decided I didn’t have time to be a diabetic.

Soon things started trickling out of control. My awareness of hypos (when BGLs drop too low)

WORDS HEATHER WISEMAN PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW NEWTON

**ON THE  
RIGHT TRACK**

'I remember trying to hide my diabetes as a teen,' says Deb. 'I want to teach kids that it's nothing to be ashamed of.'



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## THE LIGHTER SIDE OF DIABETES

'Once, my cat chewed through the cannula of my pump in the middle of the night,' laughs Deb. 'I went to pick up the pump and I seemed to have way too much cord in my hand. Then I saw the cat licking the insulin that was still coming out of the pump. I thought, "Who is going to believe this?"'

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I realised it had cracked straight through the back, but it didn't stop pumping. I was amazed. If there was ever a nuclear holocaust, I reckon cockroaches and my Medtronic pump would be the only things to survive!

Brendon, my running partners and Lachlan don't worry about me as much anymore.

**You talk a lot about your pump. It seems you're pretty fond of it!**

Having an insulin pump has been life-changing for me. It has given me more freedom, not just in terms of sport, but also lifestyle. I now, pretty consistently, have an HbA1c of 5.6.

I love food, and with the pump you can eat – within reason – basically what you like, just as long as you count your carbs accurately. The sensor is pretty amazing. I can disconnect my pump and leave it on the bathroom vanity when I'm showering, and it will still sense my BGLs.

It can take a few knocks, too. Once, when I was swimming,

**Do you ever worry that Lachlan might end up with diabetes?**

I keep an eye on it and test him from time to time. Like any parent, I'm always a bit concerned that it could happen, but there's no family history of it so the chances are slim.

If he was diagnosed with diabetes, we'd manage it. And he's seen me do my running. He knows what people with diabetes can still do. ■

Have diabetes and want to share your story? Email [diabeticliving@pacificmags.com.au](mailto:diabeticliving@pacificmags.com.au), or write to *Diabetic Living*, My Story, GPO Box 7805, Sydney, NSW 2001.

was shocking at that point. I had blood sugars of 1.5 at the end of a Sydney marathon and I had no idea.

Another bad time was just after I got engaged to my current partner, Brendon. Within six hours of his proposal, my BGLs were so low that I was slumped, unconscious, in his arms.

He knew I wanted to run the City2Surf in Sydney the next day and he knew how I'd react if I missed out on that because I was in hospital. The next day I was vomiting all the way to the start line.

I finished the race but I knew that I was in trouble, so a month later I went onto a pump. That has made everyone feel safer.