

# RUNNING

## THE RACE OF LIFE

**A Singaporean born to a Japanese father, Marco Aizawa has actually scaled mountains to overcome diabetes. The staff nurse talks about his love for endurance sports and its impact on his health in this new column for diabetes patients who want to share their experiences with others.**

Luck, said Aristotle, is when an arrow hits the guy standing next to you. But what happens when that arrow hits you right between the eyes?

Fifteen years ago, I was hit by a bout of breathlessness. It sent me straight to the East Shore Accident and Emergency. I thought I had asthma. But when the doctor broke the real diagnosis to me, I could hardly believe my ears.

It was D-day for me – I found out I had type 1 diabetes, also known as Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus. Clueless, I began poring over brochures to find out more about this disease. The information about the ill effects of poor diabetes control, for example, hypertension, heart disease, leg amputation and kidney failure, really frightened me. I was determined not to suffer from its complications.

Growing up with diabetes is not a bed of roses. There are ups and downs, like stress, and the way people look at you when they give you insulin jabs and test your blood sugars. Keeping blood sugars in control is not easy either.

However, I look upon my condition as a test of my strength and never as an obstacle. Now 26, I have completed five Project Discoveries with Touch Diabetes Support. I have scaled Mount Kinabalu twice, reaching the summit on the second attempt; cycled 500km to Kuantan and

also Cherating; and participated in a 100km trekking expedition in Singapore.

After these projects, I started on endurance sports, inspired by Lance Armstrong, Phil Southerland of Team Type 1 and Dr William Tan. They have either cancer or diabetes and are living testimonies of people who are able to live life to its fullest despite their conditions. I hope to be able to give hope to others and encourage them in the same way with my running and cycling.

Both running and cycling allow me to know my body better and help me control my blood sugars and my HbA1c. Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) and Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) are conditions I have to take note of when I exercise.

When I experience a hyperglycaemia, I drink more water and have plenty of rest. I never exercise when I have a sugar reading of more than 14 mmol/L as it will increase my blood sugar level further. When I have hypoglycemia, I rescue it by drinking something sweet and eating (depending on my sugar level). With my experience over the years, I will make it a point to reduce my insulin dosage by 2-4 units to prevent hypoglycaemia.

There are times when my blood sugar reading will be a little low, even after I have trained harder. I am still in the process of understanding what works for me and how much insulin to reduce when I exercise. I know I still have lots to discover about myself as I run this race of life. What's next for me? Ironman, perhaps!

