

AGAINST THE ODDS

Yee Yung Jen thought her life was over when she discovered she had type 2 diabetes. Slowly but surely, this brave young lady who now works as an assistant system administrator crawled out of the doldrums. She shares with honesty and true grit her experience to encourage those with diabetes to fight it, not lose to it.

In early October 2008, I was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy at the Singapore National Eye Centre. Following that, I was tested for type 2 diabetes and scheduled to undergo laser treatment for Severe Non-proliferative Retinopathy.

I experienced grey whitish shadows from the sides of both eyes and floaters. I had tingling sensations in my hands and feet, only to realise later that I was suffering from chronic complications.

Within a fortnight, I was a mere shadow of the carefree and spirited person people knew me to be. I was once a happy-go-lucky girl, who enjoyed playing computer games, clubbing, checking out the best eating places and belly dancing.

But I could not help feeling alienated, alone and angry. Why did I have to have diabetes? It did not help that my father was suffering from both Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease. My mother's lumber spine had cracked and this hindered her from working. With medical expenses chalking up, and the stress building up at work, I felt so lost and helpless and simply could not take it anymore.

By the time I was hospitalised at the psychiatry ward, I had Major Depressive Disorder and was suicidal. Something positive came out of this though; at the hospital, I got to learn more about diabetes care from a caring diabetes nurse educator who introduced me to a painless glucose kit. It was handy and easy to use.

After being discharged from the hospital, I was mentally unprepared to face the barrage of questions. I was unemployed and unsure how to readjust to the working world. So I armed myself with more insights into diabetes, medications and nutrition to get my life back on track.

Conscientious self-monitoring and a strict exercise regimen helped me to gradually work my way down from a size 46 to a size 38! My reliance on medications also decreased. I am currently on glipizide

@ Amygdalaimagery



2.5mg, losartan 50mg (protect kidney), omeprazole 20mg, neurobion forte, a tremendous improvement from my previous dosage!

With the glucose kit, I am able to discern which foods I can eat and which ones I must abstain from.

These days, I have six small meals, consisting of three main meals, three light snacks plus two servings of fruits per day. My light snacks include Glucerna SR or Milo with oats and three pieces of biscuits.

At times, of course, I will pamper myself with chocolates and sweets suitable for people with diabetes, and have little treats like granola bars, oats and

cereals. But I avoid as much as possible foods that are potentially high in sugar.

My new hobbies keep me occupied; I now enjoy photography, cycling, art construction & whipping up simple dishes during weekends like half-cooked salmon soba with sesame sauce and beef spaghetti.

Thanks to the love and support of my family and self-determination, I learned once again to enjoy and treasure my life. Life is not perfect, and there are still challenges. But I did not allow diabetes to take my life. Don't let it take yours.

Severe Non-proliferative Retinopathy is the next level up from Diabetic Retinopathy and is characterised by a significant number of small blood vessels in the retina becoming blocked.

As a greater number of blood vessels become blocked, more areas of the retina become deprived of nourishment and oxygen. A lack of sufficient oxygen supply to the retina results in a condition called "Retinal Ischemia".

To compensate for "Retinal Ischemia", these areas of the retina then send signals to the body to stimulate the growth of new blood vessels in order to try and re-establish the supply of oxygen.

