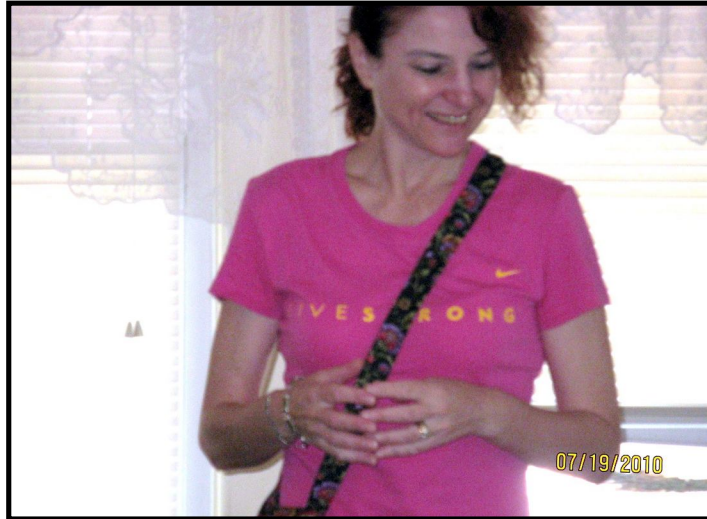


I was diagnosed with type I diabetes when I was four years old. This was in 1967 when all the medical world knew about diabetes was “don’t eat sugar”. I took insulin, but I did not see a glucometer and experience real-time glucose testing until I was 17 years old. Due to long-term affects, I was diagnosed as having renal failure when I was in my mid-30’s. I went on iron supplements and a shot of proicit every 4 weeks due to being severely anemic as a result of the renal insufficiency.

Although I always ate right (very little fat, lots of veggies and fruits, and tried to get my fair share of protein; although I’m not much of a meat eater), had a positive attitude about living with my diabetes and not being a victim to it, and even ran a diabetes support group for years, I was missing one large factor. Physical activity.

Five years ago I stepped on a splinter and did not feel it. I was ill and feverish for a week when I realized my foot hurt. I asked my fiancé to look at my foot and he said I had a splinter in it. The very next day I developed streaks going up my leg from my foot. I called my podiatrist who told me to go to the emergency room right away. To my surprise, they not only wanted to keep me in the hospital, but said they weren’t sure if they needed to put me in intensive care. I had surgery, had a pick line put in, and was on antibiotic IV therapy for a month.



Once my foot healed I began to walk in the morning. Walking made me feel so much better that I began to jog. I fell in love with jogging and before long was running. Within a year I was able to go off the iron supplements and shot of proicif for the renal failure. My nephrologist couldn’t believe it because the kidneys do not repair themselves, but my health so greatly improved that I went off those two major medications. A little over a year ago I found I was getting ill a lot and was getting winded while running. I thought it was because I am getting older: I WAS 47 years old after all. Then the morning came when I coughed up a clot of blood. I was never a smoker, and didn’t even have a cold.

I phoned my doctor who told me to go get an x-ray “right now”. I did, there was something there and it was not pneumonia (which I am prone to with my compromised immunity system). Then I was told to get a cat scan “right now”. I did, and they found a mass. Within a week I had a biopsy done and was told I had cancerous tumor in the airway of my lower right lung.

I am very fortunate because the type of cancer I had has no symptoms, but because it was sitting in my airway my bronchial tube was bleeding which drew attention to the cancer.

Two weeks later I was at the University of PA hospital in Philadelphia for a lobectomy. They removed the lower lobe of my right lung and along with it the cancer, which was completely contained in the tumor! When the surgery was scheduled my doctor told me I would be put in intensive care due to my "other issues". If my kidneys were to shut down, they would be prepared to put me on dialysis in the ICU. As it turned out I did not end up in the ICU at all! My husband keeps telling me how astounded the medical staff was at how I came through the very invasive surgery and how amazing my recovery has been. They attribute it all to my physical condition when going in for the surgery. Being a runner helped get me through this very physically trying-time!

Prior to the surgery I asked my doctor about my running; should I push myself or take it easy? He said "oh, push yourself! When you can't breath, you'll stop." He also told me I would still be able to run, but I wouldn't be as fast as I was as I have diminished lung capacity. Within two months of the lobectomy I got in my first 15 minute mile. I was huffing and puffing. But I did it.

Today, it being almost 14 months from my surgery, having a treadmill at home, I run between 4 and 5 days a week and get in between 3 and 6 miles a day, depending on whether or not my blood sugars drop low on me. I have also begun to cross train at the train yard 3 days a week on an elliptical. I am not quite the speed running that I was before the surgery, but I am close to it! And pushing myself has given me a much stronger lung, as well as my overall wellbeing.

Being addicted to running has, literally, been a lifesaver to me.