

Available  
for just  
SGD \$8.50

# The Asian diabetic

*Taking your first steps to normal blood sugar*

By Matt Pasterfield

2015

*'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and  
treat those two imposters just the same'.*

Rudyard Kipling

***With sincere thanks to:***

Nikki, Jacob, Ella, Lukas

Andrew Pasterfield

Dr .Alex Fok, and his staff

Dr. K Bernstein MD

Turf City FC

## Introduction

I wrote this book after ten years of living with diabetes in Singapore and having spent a lot of that time researching the subject and finding the best methods possible to manage the disease – both Type 1 and Type 2. This book distils ten years of learning into an easily digestible book. I don't try and cover too much detail, as I believe that it is best to remain easily understandable and practical.

If you struggle to maintain your blood sugar at the levels you want, this book is for you. It will help you to understand what causes blood sugar to rise and fall and how to make improvements, starting today.

You may be newly diagnosed or had the condition for a long while. Whatever the case, this book will help you. It will require you to make sacrifices and some of them may prove difficult. It will require you to leave some of your favorite foods out of your diet. It will require you to take up exercise.

If you follow my methods, you will see results. Depending on how quickly you are willing or able to change, you may be able to notice an immediate difference. If you find change hard, this book will at least give you a full understanding of the subject and arm you well for future decisions you make.

I try and keep my treatment of diabetes light and where possible use humor to get my point across. Don't misunderstand this and think that I do not think diabetes is a serious disease, it very much is. The problem is that you see too much sensational writing in the media and scare stories, which can put people off from accepting and understanding the issues. For this reason, I hope this is a positive book to read and encourages you to take the first steps, or improve where you find yourself today.

The book is written by someone who lives in Singapore, but the messages apply far more broadly, across Asia and further afield. The reason that I have addressed this specifically to Asians, is that I believe that there is a growing epidemic in this region, and that the level of knowledge is low – on lifestyle, diet, nutrition and how to cope with the disease.

The statistics are alarming, as you will discover in this book. But your own outcome needn't be alarming. You can live a long, healthy life with diabetes and this book will show you how.

I hope you enjoy this book and I look forward to receiving your feedback. To keep up with the latest news you can follow [www.singaporediabeteshealth.com](http://www.singaporediabeteshealth.com), and follows us on Facebook.

All the best, Matt

## Contents

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Chapter 1</b>  | Diagnosis                       |
| <b>Chapter 2</b>  | Diabetes in the family          |
| <b>Chapter 3</b>  | Learning about diabetes         |
| <b>Chapter 4</b>  | My first three months           |
| <b>Chapter 5</b>  | Why so much diabetes?           |
| <b>Chapter 6</b>  | Making your own changes         |
| <b>Chapter 7</b>  | Change your diet                |
| <b>Chapter 8</b>  | Change your routines and habits |
| <b>Chapter 9</b>  | The funny side                  |
| <b>Chapter 10</b> | Owning your care                |
| <b>Chapter 11</b> | The psychology of diabetes      |
| <b>Chapter 12</b> | Who to trust?                   |

**Medical disclaimer:** The content of this pdf is provided for general informational purposes only and is not intended as, nor should it be considered a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or a qualified health care provider regarding a medical condition. By using this download, you assume full responsibility and liability for your own actions.

## Chapter 1 - Diagnosis

Nothing prepares you for the moment that you hear you have diabetes. Most people never see it coming. For me it's one of the days I remember most clearly in my life, which so far has spanned 46 years.

Back in 2005, I had noticed that I had been rapidly losing weight and also eating a lot. That seemed strange to me; the two things seemed incompatible. Throughout my life I have been active and my weight has never really fluctuated from around 70kg. Then one night I had severe cramps in my leg, so bad in fact that I ended up on the bedroom floor in agony. I had also noticed one - admittedly unpleasant thing - there were always ants around our toilet bowl in the morning.

A few months before my wife and I had moved from London to Singapore with our young child Jacob, who at that time was 18 months old. It had been an exciting time for us, arriving in the Lion city and getting used to the way of life, the culture and the amazing food. There was of course the heat to get used to as well, with the thermometer usually in the 32-34 degree range and humidity at around 80%. So I had wondered whether my weight loss was just part of the transition to such a different environment.

My appointment at the doctor didn't last long. He ordered a few tests, but seemed largely unconcerned. I recall making the suggestion to him of diabetes and I remember clearly his dismissive reaction that it was very improbable as 'you don't look like a diabetic'. I imagine he had in mind Type 2 Diabetes - the more common variety - which can often, but not always be caused by obesity. I was far from obese at the time only weighed around 65 kg which was light for me, even though I am only around 5ft8 in height. I had concerns about diabetes in particular, as my brother has been a type 1 diabetic since the age of 10 and I knew well that there is a hereditary risk.

I remember leaving the doctor's office reassured and unconcerned and went back to work as usual in my company's office which was located not far from the famous and elegant Raffles Hotel on Beach Rd.

It was a couple of days later in the evening at home in our Condo on a side street of Bukit Timah in central Singapore, that I received a call from the doctor. When the phone rang and I saw his name on the screen, I was instantly concerned. I can clearly recall him saying that my tests results were in and it was showing 'elevated blood sugar'. He said I needed to go the Endocrine specialist – Dr. Fok at Mount Elizabeth hospital first thing in the morning. I'm not sure he even mentioned the word 'diabetes', but I remember spending a nervous night in anticipation of the appointment in the morning. At this stage, I had still managed to convince myself that there could a less serious explanation. I was soon to be disavowed of that notion.

## 10 funny things about diabetes (as published on [singaporediabeteshealth.com](http://singaporediabeteshealth.com))

1. Explaining to your 6 year old daughter why you eat all of her chocolate in the fridge last night. "Daddy really needed them" doesn't provide a 6 year old with much understanding as to why Daddy would buy her chocolates, and then eat them all in and frenzy at midnight.
2. Walking around the supermarket with your children and filling the basket with sweets, but not allowing them to buy any. Explaining, somewhat bizarrely, that these are 'Daddy's special sweets'.
3. Being asked by someone if they can borrow your pen (people on insulin will understand this one). Then wondering what would happen if you actually did lend it to them.
4. Being seen in public taking an insulin shot. Realising that people now believe you are openly taking drugs. Especially worrying if you also happen to live in Singapore.
5. People wondering why you aren't eating your own birthday cake. People wondering why you aren't eating their birthday cake.
6. Being asked by friends what they should do if you ever pass out from low blood sugar.  
  
"Should I stab you with your epi-pen?" Responding that no, I would rather you just call someone else.
7. Telling people you can't eat sweet things, and then eating huge quantities of sweet things in front of them when you blood sugar is low.
8. Seeing the next 'new cure' for diabetes is imminent. Imminent in 2050.
9. Sitting on an airplane testing your blood when the passenger next to looks at your blood testing meter. Seeing their reaction when it starts counting down from 5.
10. Being told by your GP that one upside of diabetes is that Viagra is free for diabetics on prescription in the UK. Reflecting that that's really scraping the barrel in the search for positives.

One other funny aspect of diabetes is that you meet all sorts of people, who are completely different in their approach to the disease. From the obsessive like me to those that just don't take the disease seriously, you meet all sorts. So on my website I published a list of the types of diabetic and asked people, which one are you?

Take a look at the next two pages and see if you fit any of the descriptions. I do, but by now that's probably easy to guess!



**1) The Big Mac (Upsize)** This person is a product of fast food. A home dweller with an aversion to any type of exercise, this individual finds the walk to the car for a trip to the drive-thru a bit of an aerobic struggle. This is why in Singapore, McDonalds now delivers. It's a shame the motorbike delivery man can't quite make it all the way to the armchair.

**Outlook:** Double whopping grim, with extra fries.

**2) The Diabetic in Desperate Denial (Diddy)** This individual has had the results from the doctor to explain that his blood sugar is so high that even Dracula would avoid taking a bite for the sake of his teeth. The specialist advises that lifestyle changes are needed, so the Diddy takes a different route to the cake shop. The Diddy manages to visit the specialist every once in a while, but decides to change specialists every now and again in attempt to get a different opinion. When each one explains that with 'sugar blood', rather than 'blood sugar' the only outcome is usually quite unpleasant, the Diddy vows to make some changes. The time the changes involve not thinking about diabetes at all and avoiding the specialist in the future.

**Outlook:** Dead Diddy

**3) The low carb Evangelist (LCE)** This diabetic is quite different from the ones we have encountered so far. This diabetic takes diabetes incredibly seriously and it now in fact takes over their life. They have achieved blood sugar readings which are immaculate and want to tell the world. Usually also a blogger, the LCE will tell you to eat a single morsel of cheese for dinner, and insist it isn't even in the same room as a piece of bread in case you mistakenly inhale a crumb of carbohydrate. The LCE will test their blood 3 times a minute and wants to send the local Baker to prison. Secretly loves the smell of freshly baked bread.

**Outlook:** Excellent, but don't show them a sandwich.

**4) The high carbohydrate thrill seeker (HCTS)** Loves a rollercoaster. So, this person rides on the blood sugar rollercoaster every day. Similar to Diddy, in that blood sugars are out of control, but different in that they are actually quite concerned about their health. The person has been given the typical advice that a diabetic can eat what they like as long as it's covered with medication, and hasn't challenged this advice. The thrill seeker enjoys all the foods he or she did before diagnosis. It is for this person that insulin pens keep winding all the way to 60 units. The HCTS believes that a disposable insulin pen is meant to only last a single meal.

**Outlook:** Needs a pizza advice, or things will end badly.