What Participants Are Saying about atom Alliance's

Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) Program

in Kentucky

www.atomAlliance.org
Diabetes self-management education (DSME) is changing lives in Kentucky. It is a proven intervention for empowering persons with diabetes to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the quality of their lives. DSME prevents or lessens the severity of complications resulting from diabetes such as kidney failure, amputations, loss of vision, heart failure and stroke.

It is critical for patients to take an active role in their health.

Since February 2015, more than 380 people in Kentucky have participated in classes offered by atom Alliance. The Alliance is a Medicare Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) working with healthcare providers, stakeholders, and patients to improve the quality of healthcare for targeted health conditions – including diabetes.

Here is one of a few stories from participants in the DSME classes held in the Bluegrass State:

Charlie

At 76-years-old, Charlie had never smoked or drank. But when he became ill in April and was hospitalized, he learned he had diabetes.

With encouragement from his wife of 56 years, he decided to make changes to manage his diabetes which included taking the DSME classes offered by the atom Alliance.

“Those classes opened my eyes to the benefits of exercise,” he explained.

Charlie joined the Silver Sneakers program and began to get more exercise, which includes walking nine holes to bring carts up at the local golf course where he volunteers. He’s also started eating better.

“I’m dividing my plate at home and sharing a meal at a restaurant,” he said.

The American Diabetes Association’s Create Your Plate is a simple and effective way to manage blood glucose levels and lose weight. With this method, you fill your plate with more non-starchy veggies and smaller portions of grain/starchy foods and protein.

Charlie and his wife are also taking longer to grocery shop now that they are reading labels.

“We really do watch what we eat,” he said.

As a participant in the DSME classes, he enjoyed hearing other people’s stories about making positive lifestyle changes.

“Nancy (his DSME facilitator) taught us a lot. I learned diabetes is bad but treatable,” he said.

It was encouraging for him to hear how other DSME participants live well with diabetes. And he told himself, “I can do this!”

All the hard work has paid off. Charlie has lost 28 pounds and his A1C went from 9.9 to 7.1. He also reports his cholesterol is “way down.”

Now he’s a changed man.

“I’m happy and feel good,” he said.
**JoAnn**

When JoAnn was living in Louisville, she found out that she had diabetes and her doctor put her on medication. After she moved, her new doctor suggested she join a local weight-loss and exercise program.

“Then he told me if I stuck with it then I could get off my medicine, which I have. I keep it (her diabetes) under control that way,” she said.

In addition to her exercise program, JoAnn does yard work at home and walks her dogs. “We walk about a mile,” she said.

**Fredric**

Fredric’s mother and father both had diabetes. And several of his siblings have it as well.

“Some of them control it entirely with diet and exercise, and some of us have to have medication,” he explained.

Fredric’s father was diagnosed with diabetes at age 55. “I was diagnosed at age 33; so, I had an early start on taking care of myself,” he said.

Although he had been managing the disease for years, he enrolled in the DSME class as a bit of a refresher course. The plate exercise served as a good reminder for Fredric.

**Hazel**

When asked about what positive changes she had made as a result of participating in the Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) offered by atom Alliance, “I quit drinking pop!” Hazel exclaimed.

Diagnosed as having Type 2 Diabetes for about five years, Hazel heard about the classes at her doctor’s office and decided to attend. She enjoyed learning about “carbs and sugars in food - stuff I didn't know.”

Because she's been able to control her diabetes, JoAnn was surprised at how much she learned from the DSME classes.

She really enjoyed the program.

“I was amazed at all that I (learned) about how diabetes can affect your whole body,” she said. “I learned a lot of things that I really didn't know and would recommend it to anyone.”

The program showed us a 9-inch plate which was used to demonstrate the amount of food and the types of food that we should be eating and I used that example to show my wife where we should be,” he said. “She adjusted and we're doing fine. Every so often we need to be reminded of what portion size really is, and I pay close attention to that now,” he said.

Fredric’s experience proved even those who have been managing diabetes for decades can still learn something new - or have healthy habits reinforced - by participating in the DSME classes.

Now Hazel reads food labels carefully and watches her food portion sizes closely. And after attending a class on physical activity, she does low-impact leg exercises in bed.

She believes these small changes are making her healthier and that all of her peer participants benefited from the easy-to-understand training.

“We all came away with something; I know I did,” she said.
Jackie

Jackie realized she was in denial about her diabetes diagnosis and that she needed healthier eating habits. That’s why she decided to participate in the DSME classes offered by atom Alliance. The classes taught her the importance of taking the time to read food labels.

She quickly found that she enjoyed the engaging learning sessions. She particularly liked the fat and sugar activity.

“That activity really opened my eyes to how much fat and sugar I was actually eating,” she said.

She now uses the hand method for meal planning she learned in the course to help determine portion sizes. And she resolved to try her best to avoid bad habits.

For example, she has stopped overeating just to finish her plate. And with willpower she now says “no” to ice cream, even though others question her healthier choices asking “Why are you saying ‘no’ to ice cream?”

Jackie substitutes healthier foods, such as cottage cheese, into her diet even if she is not overly fond of them.

For her, the key has been to “set my mind” on making better choices. Now, more determined than ever, she says she feels good.

And she wants others to benefit from the life-changing classes.

When asked what advice she'd give others who may be worried about diabetes, she enthusiastically said, “Take the class!”

For more information about classes in your local community, contact

Nancy Semrau, RN
Quality Improvement Advisor
(502) 680-2391
nancy.semrau@area-g.hcqis.org

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