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## **Ten Sample Qs and As for Media Interviews**

### ***Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes***

*Q: How serious a problem is diabetes?*

Diabetes is a life-threatening disease at epidemic levels around the world. More than 20 million Americans have type 2 diabetes; worldwide about 200 million people suffer from it. And in recent years, because of obesity and terrible eating habits, a surprising number of our nation's young children are being diagnosed with it—although up until now, it has always been seen as an adult disease. Many people trying to manage their diabetes ultimately develop one or more of many severe complications, including heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, amputations, and nervous system damage. The risk of premature death among people with diabetes is about twice that of people without the disease.

*Q: Your book is called Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes. Describe your program and how it's different from other treatment approaches.*

Many people who have diabetes assume it is something that they just have to live with, a serious problem that will inevitably get worse. My book describes a completely new approach to treating diabetes—one that focuses on reversing the disease, rather than just managing it. The program is based on a simple set of diet changes—a delicious low-fat vegan diet that focuses on vegetables, legumes, grains, and fruits and omits animal products and added vegetable oils. It also favors foods with a low-glycemic index, such as pasta, that have less effect on blood sugar. Unlike other diets, this program doesn't demand that the individual limit carbs, count calories, or stick to small portions. In fact, patients can eat as much as they want.

*Q: Can this book also help people with type 1 diabetes or those concerned about developing the disease?*

Yes, definitely. The program described in my book can help whether an individual has type 2 diabetes and wants to gain control of his or her health, or has type 1 diabetes and needs to reduce the disease's intrusion on his or her life. And if the reader doesn't have diabetes, but is at risk of developing it, this is also a powerful program for preventing the disease.

*Q: I've heard that you recently completed a diabetes study funded by the National Institutes of Health. Tell us about your findings.*

My colleagues at the University of Toronto and George Washington University and I conducted a major research study comparing the effects of a low-fat vegan diet with the standard diabetes diet, the one

## Ten Sample Qs and As for Media Interviews, continued

promoted by the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Our study found that the low-fat vegan diet controlled blood sugar three times more effectively than the ADA diet. It also resulted in faster weight loss and better cholesterol control. Other “side effects” of the menu change included lower blood pressure and increased energy. The findings were published in the August 2006 issue of *Diabetes Care*, the journal of the ADA.

*Q: How did you get interested in diabetes?*

I’ve been interested in how dietary changes can help prevent and treat disease ever since medical school. Once I founded PCRM, I had the opportunity to begin conducting clinical research studies, looking at how the right food can help reverse different health problems. Diabetes is one of the diseases that is clearly affected by lifestyle. And I have a special interest in diabetes because my father Donald M. Barnard, M.D., was the diabetes expert in his Midwest community. In fact, the book is dedicated to him and to our research participants.

*Q: Tell us how the diet works on a cellular level.*

When someone has diabetes, insulin (the hormone produced in the pancreas) has a difficult time moving sugar out of the bloodstream and into that person’s cells. That’s because tiny amounts of fat in the person’s cells prevent the insulin from “opening” the cell membrane, or what can essentially be thought of as a lock. Instead, these bits of fat—which build up when a person eats a high-fat diet—clog up the cell and the insulin can’t do its job. With the low-fat vegan diet, however, individuals can essentially alter what goes on in their cells. By eliminating most fat from their diet, that person is basically cleaning up his or her cells, which allows the insulin to move the glucose into the cells where it belongs.

*Q: Tell us more about the vegan diet described in the book. What kinds of foods do you recommend?*

The foundation of our dietary program is what we like to call the “New Four Food Groups”—grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit. These plant foods have little or no fat and zero cholesterol and are packed with fiber and other healthful compounds. We have sample menus and recipes posted on our Web site—ReverseDiabetesTour.org—but I’ll give you some ideas of the kinds of foods that are included. For breakfast, one might have a big bowl of old-fashioned oatmeal with blueberries, a half cantaloupe, veggie sausage, and some rye toast. For lunch, you might have a split pea or lentil soup, a salad and a hummus sandwich or a veggie burger. Dinner might be spaghetti with a marinara sauce, bean burritos, or tofu stir-fry with vegetables. There is a world of delicious vegetarian food to explore.

*Q: You’ve written that the low-fat vegan diet is actually easier to follow than the standard diabetes diet. Why do you think that’s true?*

It’s counterintuitive, I know, but we’ve found in all our research that participants on the vegan arm of any given study have an easier time of sticking with their dietary changes than those following other diets. One reason is that they usually have better, faster results so they are encouraged to keep going. Another big reason is that they have fewer limitations to deal with. In the ADA standard diet, people have to count calories, limit their carbohydrates, and stick with smaller portions than they might want. With our approach, people can eat as much as they want, including plenty of carbohydrates such as pasta and dark bread. It can take a bit of time to get familiar with new foods one hasn’t tried before—but once people do, they’re happy they did.

## Ten Sample Qs and As for Media Interviews, continued

Nancy Boughn, one study participant who was able to get off one of her diabetes medications—and who lost 40 pounds in the process—found the vegan diet was a welcome change from the ADA diet she had been on. She had been fed up with the lack of results on the ADA diet.

*Q: Some people have a tough time breaking bad eating habits, but you believe you have some ways to help people revamp their diets with confidence. What's the best way to make the change?*

There's a special diet trick that our research participants have found particularly helpful—simply try our guidelines for three weeks. This is not the time to stick your toe in the swimming pool; it's time to jump in. For one, you get fast results. Secondly, a diet change really is like getting into a swimming pool. If you ease your way into the water inch by inch, it is a painful process. But if you plunge in, very soon you see that the water feels fine. You'll also find that your taste buds have a memory of about three weeks, and jumping into the diet change allows them to rapidly adjust.

*Q: But isn't diabetes genetic? How much can diet help someone prevent or reverse diabetes if it's in the family?*

It's true that genes play a role, but abundant evidence shows that changes in diet and lifestyle can cut the odds that diabetes will occur. And if it does occur, diet can dramatically alter its course. The point is this: Some genes are dictators and others are not. The genes for hair or eye color, for example, really are dictators. If they call for you to have brown hair or blue eyes, you can't argue. But the genes for diabetes are more like committees. They don't give orders; they make suggestions. If diabetes runs in our family, it doesn't mean that we have to end up with the disease. We have more control than you might imagine.