

Long Covid and Type 2 diabetes

Tracey Hayes was only getting used to a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, adding even more challenges, writes **Deborah Condon**



When Tracey Hayes was diagnosed with Type 2, she started exercising and lost weight, but after getting Covid-19 with lingering symptoms, there has been a long way to recovery and resumption of exercise

Following a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes in 2019, Tracey Hayes from Cloughjordan in Tipperary worked hard to overhaul her lifestyle. However, like so many others, the Covid pandemic hit her health hard, but she is determined to turn that around.

Now aged 44, Tracey says that in 2019, she was feeling tired and unwell a lot. However, it was only when she went to her GP for another issue that her diabetes was discovered.

"When I went back to the nurse for the results of my bloods, she said I had Type 2. I was shocked, but at that stage, I was so sick of being sick. The doctor emphasised that I was still young and advised me to lose weight and exercise, so I launched into a healthy lifestyle," she explains.

Tracey was not put on diabetes medication at that point, but was put on blood pressure medication. For almost two years, she was "doing great".

However, in January 2021, she got Covid-19 and subsequently developed long Covid.

"Before that, I was exercising and hiking. I was very active and was in good shape. Then my whole family got

Covid but I seemed to be the one where it was lingering. My chest was bad and it affected my ability to exercise. I had one problem after another and ended up in hospital twice," she recalls.

Because she was not able to exercise, from January 2021, she slowly started regaining weight.

"I would go for a walk but would be tired for three days after. In the lockdowns of 2020, I still exercised but between January and December 2021, I wasn't able to," she explains.

In February 2022, she ended up in hospital and was put back on blood pressure medication which she had previously managed to get off. She was also put on diabetes medication and at this point, her weight had increased significantly.

"It was like doing a 360 back into the way I was before I had diabetes. I felt like I was back at square one again and had to start from scratch. When I came out of hospital at the end of February, I had

to start again but this time I had the diabetes medication to help me," she says.

She also notes that she had to get rid of the idea that diabetes is something you manage on your own.

"After hospital, I registered as a member of Diabetes Ireland because someone had told me that they give good support. I set a target of doing the Diabetes Ireland 10k on the May bank holiday weekend. I did it and raised nearly €800.

"In the beginning, I would have had shame around Type 2, thinking it was my fault, but I had to put myself out there to commit to raising money," she says.

After the 10k, she set herself another challenge of giving up junk food and refined (processed) sugar. She set herself a target of doing that for 21 days to break the habit. When the 21 days had passed, she decided to go for 100 days and she reached that target in early June.

She says that all of this has had a big impact on her diabetes. Between February and June, she lost two stone in weight and she is very happy to have her energy back.

"If you asked me if I still have long Covid, I'd say no because the energy is back. I walk every day and I started back in the gym. I also get lots of support online. I find Instagram good because I feel accountable," she says.

However, she feels that there needs to be more awareness of Type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes.

"I wouldn't have been told I was pre-diabetic. There needs to be more information on this. Plenty of people I have spoken to never received any information other than being told to 'cut down their weight'. However, a lot of people haven't a clue how to do that."