**The dangers of diabetes:**

**How Vitality can help**

**Social media examples:**

Living with diabetes? This is one of the biggest health issues of our time. As part of World Diabetes Month, we chatted to researcher Chris Christoforou about how the Vitality programme can help manage this disease: The dangers of diabetes: How Vitality can help #LiveLifeWithVitality

Early diagnosis is important to prevent the worst effects of type 2 diabetes. The best way to detect this chronic disease early? Get regular check-ups, starting with your Vitality Health Check: The dangers of diabetes: How Vitality can help #LiveLifeWithVitality

The number of life years lost for a 50-year-old living with diabetes from not keeping a healthy lifestyle can be in the order of ~30 years. The best way to detect this chronic disease early? Get regular check-ups, starting with your Vitality Health Check: The dangers of diabetes: How Vitality can help #LiveLifeWithVitality

**Article:**

Diabetes is one of the biggest health issues of our time, and to highlight this chronic condition as part of World Diabetes Month, we chatted to researcher Chris Christoforou about how the Vitality programme can help diagnose and better manage this disease.

“The main concern here,” begins Chris, an actuary who heads up analytics for Vitality’s Central R&D, “is that despite decades of improvements and advances in medical care for all types of chronic disease, we’re just not shifting the dial enough on diabetes. In fact, type 2 diabetes, a condition where your body doesn’t use insulin properly so you have dangerous spikes in your blood sugar levels, is on the rise.”

To see what needs to change, Chris and his Vitality team have been unpacking Vitality research on diabetes to understand the impact on life expectancy and healthy life years, what the most important modifiable behaviours are, and how to better predict diabetes risk in the future.

One study uses Vitality’s new Healthy Futures risk assessment tool – this is an algorithm that shows people how long they will live, how many of these years will be in good health, and the number one action they can take to improve the quality of their life.

For people living with diabetes, this includes 7 important lifestyle behaviours:

1. Quit smoking
2. Keep your glucose and HbA1c levels in check
3. Monitor your blood pressure
4. Get your BMI in a healthy range
5. Focus on healthy cholesterol levels
6. Prioritise a healthy diet
7. Exercise regularly

The number of life years lost for a 50-year-old living with diabetes from not keeping a healthy lifestyle can be in the order of 30+ years. “This shows that the impact is material – and modifiable,” says Chris.

Other research has also shown that Vitality’s ability to predict who may develop type 2 diabetes in the next 5 years is becoming more accurate. Unsurprisingly, the most important lifestyle factors to prevent the disease include having a healthy weight and waist circumference, exercise, a healthy blood pressure and healthy fasting glucose levels.

“We use our extensive database of Vitality members to analyse the impact that a healthy lifestyle can have on reducing disease risk. And, just as importantly, our role is to bridge the gap between the research, which is often more academic, and make this consumer friendly so that we can share our findings in easy-to-understand ways,” adds Chris.

Vitality’s programme is perfectly aligned to incentivise the right lifestyle for members with type 2 diabetes which can significantly improve their health and life expectancy.

Additionally, the programme can help members (who are at risk) prevent the onset of this disease.

**Know your risk + take action**

According to Chris and his team, underpinning healthy biometric markers is a healthy diet and exercise. And forming healthy habits in these areas will go a long way to a longer healthier life. “Vitality has done considerable work in the habit space,” he says, “And I’ll be the first to say: it’s not easy to change something you’re so used to doing. Maybe that’s eating too much junk food, or leading a sedentary life, or not managing your stress – whatever these bad habits are, they need to change – your life truly does depend on it.”

**So, what is Vitality’s advice to start forming healthier habits?**

The Habit Index introduces the concept of **habit laddering**, which can help us tobuild healthier habits through 3 steps:

1. **Set a goal or target:** check where you are currently and understand the health benefits to achieving this goal.
2. **Start small:** choose an activity that is easy and practical to do, often.
3. **Repeat this, and then intensify:** keep up the activity and only increase the intensity once the action has been repeated for between 4 and 6 weeks.

Incorporating healthy changes into your life is part of Vitality’s commitment to what’s called ‘shared value’. What’s good for the individual (in this case, a longer and better quality of life with better health) is also good for other stakeholders, like employers who enjoy more productive workers, insurers who have fewer health claims to pay out and even broader society that benefits from a healthier population.

Here, the Vitality programme is designed with member health in mind, using smart tech, actuarial science and behavioural insights to drive healthy actions.

**The role of the Vitality Health Check**

Early diagnosis is important to prevent the worst effects of type 2 diabetes (and other preventable conditions). Here, Chris reminds us to “know your numbers”. Vitality members can easily do this with the Vitality Health Check, a simple set of health screenings: blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, weight, and smoking status.

It’s quick, painless, free and also rewarding as you can earn up to X points to improve your Vitality Status by completing this VHC every year. Book yours now.

“We have to do more to reduce the prevalence of diabetes which has been steadily increasing over the past few decades,” concludes Chris, “and Vitality is making great strides here by driving more awareness, education and action to help achieve this”.

*For more information about Vitality’s evidence-based approach that encourages and rewards members for healthier living, visit the* [*Vitality website*](https://www.vitality.com/)*.*

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