Diabetes care has changed significantly since the American Diabetes Association (ADA) was founded in 1940, with new medicines, devices, and technologies emerging practically every year. Over the same time period, people with diabetes have proved they’re capable of amazing things, refused to be defined by their diabetes, and continually pushed for better tools, care, and medicines.

In this timeline, Diabetes Forecast explores highlights in the progress of the people, care, and culture of diabetes over the past 75 years.

**April 2, 1940**

Here’s how the **ADA is born:** 12 delegates attend a meeting of the Committee for the Establishment of a National Diabetes Association in Cleveland.

**1941**

Miles Laboratory launches **Clinitest**, a urine glucose-testing tablet. It’s an improvement over the existing standard, Benedict’s solution, which must be mixed with urine and heated over boiling water.

**1947**

The ADA opens its **first diabetes camp** for children in Montgomery, Alabama.

**1948**

**ADA Forecast** (now **Diabetes Forecast**) launches as a **quarterly magazine** for people living with diabetes. About 53,000 sample copies are distributed to physicians, pharmacists, and clinics.

Celebrate the American Diabetes Association’s 75th anniversary with a stroll down memory lane

**BY REGAN MINNERS**
If you have diabetes and are a frequent traveler, you might carry a **travel diabetes kit** similar to this one.

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**1959**

Two distinct **types of diabetes** are identified: “insulin-dependent” (type 1) and “non insulin-dependent” (type 2) diabetes, suggesting the need to customize therapies as well as research approaches.

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**1955**

French researchers notice hypoglycemia in patients being treated for typhoid with a certain type of antibiotic. From these drugs, **sulfonylureas** are born as a type 2 diabetes treatment.

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**1950**

The American Diabetes Association, the American Dietetic Association (now the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics), and the U.S. Public Health Service develop the **diabetes exchange system**, for the first time dividing foods into six “exchanges” based on calorie, carbohydrate, protein, and fat content per serving. This new system spares people with diabetes the tedious weighing and measuring of everything they plan to eat.

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**1964**

The Ames Company introduces Dextrostix, the **first test strips** that use a drop of blood to measure glucose levels, providing real-time information about blood glucose levels.

**OCTOBER**

Billy Mills, an Olympian with diabetes, wins the gold in the men’s 10,000-meter race.
Living History

1966
The first successful pancreas transplant is performed at the University of Minnesota Hospital, proving it’s possible for a person with type 1 to live without insulin injections, though antirejection medications are required.

1973
New, more highly purified beef and pork insulins reduce the chances of allergic reactions.

1974
The National Diabetes Mellitus Research and Education Act is passed. This first-of-its-kind legislation specifically allocates funds for diabetes research, training centers, and a long-range plan. The act paves the way for future landmark legislation for people with diabetes and diabetes research.

1977
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention opens a division devoted to diabetes. In 1989, the name will change to its current Division of Diabetes Translation.

The A1C test, the gold standard for measuring blood glucose control, is developed.

1979
A New England Journal of Medicine study finds that blood glucose can be lowered to normal levels through the use of a portable insulin infusion pump, setting the stage for widespread pump therapy.

1981
After being available in doctors’ offices for the past 11 years, blood glucose monitors are ready for home use. The first blood glucose meter designed specifically for use by people with diabetes, the Ames Glucometer I, is introduced.

1982
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves the first synthetic human insulin, Eli Lilly and Co.’s Humulin. Synthesizing insulin in a lab rather than relying on pancreases left over from the meat industry helps ensure a virtually unlimited supply.

1985
With its NovoPen, Novo Nordisk introduces the world to the first insulin pen. The pen combines insulin and a way to inject it into one device.

1986
The ADA publishes the first National Standards for Diabetes Patient Education. At about the same time, the National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators is born, creating a system for accrediting diabetes educators. For the first time, people with diabetes can seek out a certified diabetes educator—or, as they’re often called today, a CDE—to learn skills related to medication management, monitoring, eating, exercise, and coping with diabetes.

1987
The Association launches the Education Recognition Program, the first to review, assess, and recognize quality diabetes education.
Patti LaBelle is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and quickly becomes committed to healthy living and diabetes management, speaking out and helping others with diabetes do the same.

The United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS) finds that tight blood glucose control can prevent complications in people with type 2 diabetes, supporting the results of the DCCT and solidifying the new course of treatment for people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

Steel Magnolias, probably the most famous film portrayal of a person with diabetes, is released. While Julia Roberts’s character had pregnancy complications, many women with diabetes are able to have healthy pregnancies and babies.

Teddy Ryder, who at age 5 was one of the first people to take insulin “extract” in 1922, becomes the first person to live for 70 years with diabetes.

The ADA publishes the “Standards of Care for Patients With Diabetes Mellitus,” setting guidelines for health care providers to use in clinical care of people with diabetes. These lay a foundation for quality and medical practitioner accountability in diabetes care and are updated annually by the Association.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is signed into law, promoting equal opportunity and prohibiting discrimination against people with physical or mental disabilities, including diabetes.

“King of Blues” B.B. King is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and becomes a prominent spokesperson for awareness of the condition.

Results of the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT) show that people with type 1 diabetes can significantly lower their risk of complications by keeping blood glucose levels as close to normal as possible.

Glucophage (metformin) is approved by the FDA. It goes on to become the first-choice medication for most people with type 2 diabetes.

A flood of new diabetes medicines comes out around the turn of the century: type 2 drug rosiglitazone (Avandia) in 1999, long-acting insulin glargine (Lantus) in 2000, injectables pramlintide (Symlin) and exenatide (Byetta) in 2005, and type 2 med sitagliptin (Januvia) in 2006.

After winning Miss Virginia in 1998, Nicole Johnson goes on to win Miss America 1999, becoming the first Miss America to compete while wearing an insulin pump (and later inspiring Miss Idaho 2014, Sierra Sandison).

The Association’s national website, diabetes.org, launches. It’s a one-stop shop for diabetes information and resources.

Insulin lispro (Humalog) is the first rapid-acting insulin.

Patti LaBelle is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and quickly becomes committed to healthy living and diabetes management, speaking out and helping others with diabetes do the same.
Gary Hall Jr. competes in the Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia. He takes home four medals, including a gold in the individual 50-meter freestyle. He goes on to win multiple medals at the 2004 Athens games. Also on the scene: Kris Freeman, a type 1 cross-country skier who will compete in every Olympic Winter Games between 2002 and 2014.

Not all “innovations” succeed. The GlucoWatch Biographer, the first noninvasive blood glucose monitor worn on the wrist, receives FDA approval in early 2001. It’s designed to give blood glucose readings without a single drop of blood. It doesn’t work well and is removed from the market in 2007.

The Finnish Diabetes Prevention Study (DPS) shows for the first time that type 2 diabetes can be prevented through healthy eating and physical activity.

It’s hard to pinpoint the exact birth date of the diabetes online community (DOC) on social media, but references go back to at least 2005; the Children With Diabetes website started in 1995. The DOC helps people from all over the globe learn from, connect with, and support each other via smartphone and computer. And—perhaps most important—it shows them that they are most definitely not alone.

The concept of cardiometabolic risk—how factors such as blood pressure and cholesterol play into your risk for type 2 diabetes and heart disease—gains traction. It’s not about just blood glucose anymore.

The Epidemiology of Diabetes Interventions and Complications (EDIC) trial shows the effect of “metabolic memory”: Tight blood glucose control for a period of time helps you live a longer, healthier life with diabetes, even if you’re not always able to maintain close-to-normal levels beyond the initial tight-control period.
Bret Michaels is crowned the next “Celebrity Apprentice” by Donald Trump, raising both funds for and awareness of diabetes. Michaels, lead singer for the ‘80s band Poison, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age 6.

The Affordable Care Act is signed into law, significantly improving access to health insurance coverage for people with diabetes.

The New England Journal of Medicine publishes a study showing that people with type 2 diabetes can go into remission after bariatric surgery. Although doctors have been performing these weight-loss surgeries since the 1950s, until now the procedure has been used only as a treatment for obesity.

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