

# STORIES OF HOPE

## Losing Mom Inspires Daughter to Beat Type 2

Ina Mendoza-Wilson of Bowie, Md., was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at 35, the same age her mother died of complications from type 2 diabetes.

"I decided that very day I would not be a statistic. I decided that day I would do everything I could to live another 35 years, at least," Mendoza-Wilson says.

**The Mother She Never Knew.** Her mother, who had dependency problems, left 2-year-old Ina with an aunt and uncle who adopted her at age 4, around the last time Ina saw her mother.

She grew up knowing that many members of her mother's family had type 2 diabetes and that several had amputations, even though most seemed to have healthy lifestyles and few carried extra weight. At age 16, she learned that her mother had died.

"It was scary. It affected me," Mendoza-Wilson says. "I tried to be more mindful of my food choices, and it encouraged me to exercise."

**A Different Route.** After high school she had a daughter Charmaine. They lived in the Washington, D.C., area where she met and married Wilbert Wilson. Then, Mendoza-Wilson's physician told her she had type 2 diabetes.

"It was very impactful to be diagnosed at 35, the same age that my mother died," she says. "I thought I was prepared for the diagnosis because it runs in my family." She was frightened yet determined to live long, but she soon learned how little she actually knew about managing diabetes.

"I woke up with my toes tingling," she recalls. She went to an endocrinologist, who explained that complications develop when blood glucose is out of control. She started testing her blood four times a day. She attended nutrition classes. She visited the American Diabetes Association website. She made lifestyle changes and lost 25 pounds.

"That's for my mother," she says, vowing to cherish life experiences that her mother never knew.

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**A Lot to Live For.** Ten years later, Mendoza-Wilson remains diligent at managing diabetes because she plans to enjoy life with Wilbert, their daughter, now 26, and their 5-year-old granddaughter, Harmony.

"I make an honest effort every day to be the best me I can be," she says. "I have a lot to live for."

She exercises daily, making frequent use of a gym membership, and recently ran in her first 5-kilometer race. She has volunteered for Step Out: Walk to Stop Diabetes in the District of Columbia and other Association events. She also tries to help family, friends and others by learning and sharing the facts about managing diabetes – information that could have saved her mother.

"Her life and her death at such a young age were such a waste," Mendoza-Wilson says. "I could have helped her learn how to take care of herself." ▲

*Find information on managing type 2 diabetes at [diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes](http://diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes).*



*Ina Mendoza-Wilson*

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