

STORIES OF HOPE

A Young Mother Fears a Short Future

Surrounded by her four young children, 28-year-old Melissa Partridge looked to the future and wondered how long she could be an active, involved mother.

"I've never met anyone who has survived 50 years with diabetes," she recalls thinking. The fact that she developed type 1 diabetes 23 years ago led Partridge to a harsh conclusion: "I'm already halfway through my life."

She had always taken injections, finger pokes, blood-glucose incidents and food restrictions in stride. "Diabetes was just something I had," she says. But her attitude changed with the passing years and growing children – Sierra, 7, Aubrey, 4, Evan, 3, and Bridget, who turns 2 on Oct. 30.

"It's not just about me anymore," she wrote on StopDiabetes.org. "I want to be a healthy, vibrant mother who can provide an amazing life for them. I don't want to have to sit out of their lives due to low blood sugars, neuropathy, amputation or worse. I don't want to die when my grandbabies are being born."

Unfortunately, living in a small town in northeast Montana, just 10 miles from the Canadian border, means resources are limited. The closest endocrinologist is five hours away, the closest certified diabetes educator 2 ½ hours away.

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Partridge and her husband, Wayne, feel blessed that four high-risk pregnancies resulted in four healthy children and just one scare. During her last pregnancy, Partridge saw a traveling obstetrician, who comes to town once a month, and didn't have an ultrasound after week 20. When a non-stress test indicated the baby had an abnormal heart rate, Partridge underwent an emergency c-section. Because of a degenerating placenta, Bridget weighed just 4 pounds, 13 ounces.

The desire to be there for her children decades from now has motivated Partridge to do more to manage her diabetes. She reached out for information and support through the Internet, attended a diabetes conference, and recently met a woman who has lived with diabetes for 57 years.

"It's hard to focus on yourself when you're a mom, but I have to take care of myself first to take care of my kids," Partridge says. "Knowledge is power. Now that I know what can happen to me, there are things I can do to prevent that from happening." ▲



Melissa Partridge and her children, from left, Sierra, Evan, Bridget and Aubrey