

## [TRANSCRIPT]

**Robert:** Hi, my name is Robert and I'm a TeamingUp Champion.

**Robert:** When I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 2011, I was angry and disappointed in myself. My older brother and sister both have Type 2 diabetes and I had been determined to avoid the disease. While I was heartbroken with the diagnosis, I was also ready to take action to manage my diabetes.

**Robert:** I'm a retired Army officer, so I initially went about it in a very regimented way. I became obsessed with how I ate and I thought that sugar could no longer be part of my diet. I learned, however, that an overly restrictive approach just isn't realistic for me and that's when I began to take more manageable steps – beginning with reading food nutrition labels to understand how many carbohydrates I was eating, focus on smaller portions and making healthier choices.

**Robert:** There are four steps to making sense of nutrition labels:

- Skip the front of the package claims
- Check the serving size first
- Know what affects your blood sugar (carbohydrates)
- Then, key in on other important numbers (like sodium and cholesterol)

**Robert:** Food nutrition labels provide a lot of helpful information, but at first it can be overwhelming. Even before my diagnosis, I looked at the back of the package for a true sense of the nutritional value (versus what's on front) and the serving size to let me know what the portion size was, and I made note of calories and fat to try to stay within the recommended daily allowance. Once I was diagnosed with diabetes, the rest of the label became an important part of my overall blood sugar management.

**Robert:** My doctor told me that I could take it a step at a time, so I focused first on understanding carbohydrates and setting a daily carbohydrate goal with my healthcare provider. Once I knew my carbohydrate goal, I would look at the carbohydrates for the serving size I was eating and keep track of it during the meal in a journal. Once I did, I could begin to change things up based on carbohydrate values. For example, if I wanted to add a small serving of fruit to my meal, I'd think about the piece of bread that I'd need to remove. It becomes a balancing act of knowing how to read your nutrition label and knowing your daily carbohydrate goal, but it is quite possible to be successful with it.

**Robert:** In fact, once I felt confident in my carbohydrate counting, I began to also focus on sodium and using the nutrition label to choose an option with less salt when possible.

**Robert:** I also look at fiber and cholesterol values so I can keep track of if I'm getting enough fiber or too much cholesterol, and I read the ingredients list for things like trans fats that I try to avoid. I avoid trans fats in processed foods by reading the ingredients label for the words partially hydrogenated oils, which is code for trans fats.

**Robert:** Now that I've been reading nutrition labels for some time and counting my carbohydrates, when I'm eating out, I can still make healthy food choices based on the knowledge I've gained through reading and understanding nutrition labels. It's second nature.

**Robert:** For those products that don't have a nutrition label like fresh produce, there are pocket-sized resource books that you can bring shopping... or even apps like the GoMeals app on the TeamingUp website that will give you similar information.

**Robert:** Knowing the nutritional value of the foods I eat gives me confidence that I'm making healthier food choices to better manage my diabetes...and my family benefits by eating healthier too!

**Robert:** I'm happy to say that I no longer feel limited by my food choices or disappointed in myself... in fact, I'm *proud* that thanks to my nutrition knowledge, exercise and taking my medications as prescribed by my doctor, I've seen positive results in my blood sugar management.

**SUPER:** Talk with your doctor before making any changes to your diet, exercise or treatment routine.