



In May, Tony Chiaravalle ran in the 13th annual Lakewood Hospital Ambulance Chase, the hospital's 5K Race/Walk fundraising event. He is pictured with his nutritionist Gretchen Spetz, MS, RD, LD.

Tags: [Diabetes](http://onlinehealthessentials.com/tag/diabetes/), [Health](http://onlinehealthessentials.com/tag/health/)

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## Tackling Diabetes

**Tony Chiaravalle is victorious over diabetes thanks to a healthy lifestyle game plan.**

<http://onlinehealthessentials.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tackling-Diabetes-Doctors1.jpg>At 375 pounds, Tony Chiaravalle was living in denial. The former football player had tipped an athletic 300 pounds since he was 17 years old, but now in his late 30s he struggled to manage Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and sleep apnea. He had maxed out his insulin dosage and was taking 11 medications, yet didn't accept the seriousness of his health situation until a sobering conversation with a new primary care physician.

"He told me I would be dead in three to four years if I didn't do something drastic," says Tony. "I left his office that day with an appointment booked for a bariatric surgery consultation at Cleveland Clinic."

The father of three had gradually gained weight as the bustle of family life and serving as assistant principal at Garfield Middle School (in Lakewood) replaced gridiron workouts. But, he tapped his inner athlete and dedicated himself to meet the eligibility requirements for bariatric surgery. His resolve was met by full team support and expert coaching in lifestyle changes from Cleveland Clinic and the Lakewood Hospital Diabetes and Endocrine Center.

**Coach For Life**

In February 2013, he met with dietitian Gretchen Spetz, MS, RD, LD, Cleveland Clinic's Center for Human Nutrition, and formed a game plan, using fitness apps to track his progress. His goal was to lose 15 pounds. He cut sugar, drank more water, watched his portions and prepared lean meats and leafy green vegetables. Small physical activity changes like parking farther from his building and taking the stairs helped. His dietitian even gave him advice to manage the 24/7 buffet on an upcoming cruise vacation.

"I've played for some great coaches over the years, and Gretchen was the best I have ever played for," Tony says. He dropped to 338, 325 and 315 pounds. Then, the unexpected: "She said, 'You may not need bariatric surgery. There is a good chance you can do this on your own.'"

She would prove right. Tony's blood sugar levels and insulin doses also were coming down. He was taking a fraction of the medicine he had been taking. Then, days before his family's spring break cruise, he picked up a call from his Lakewood Hospital endocrinologist Kevin Borst, DO.

"Are you sitting down?" Tony dropped to his knees when Dr. Borst told him that he no longer needed insulin, that he had essentially tackled diabetes. Bringing his opponent (diabetes) under control, with weight loss, healthier eating and exercise allowed him to stop taking the diabetes medications as well.

"Tony's attention to detail and work ethic is very unique," says Dr. Borst. "The amount of medication that he was on was not easy to overcome. For him to come off all diabetes medications was a great accomplishment."

"Tony is an inspiration," says Spetz. "Through his story, I hope others see that they have the power to achieve their health goals. You just need a little discipline and patience and the willingness to call on the support of others."

## Back in the Game

Today, Tony is in maintenance mode, keeping his weight in the 245 to 255-pound range. Aside from vitamin supplements, he is medication free. He has energy to go hunting, hiking and bicycling with his family, and took up his students' challenge to run in the Lakewood Hospital Ambulance Chase. The next cruise adventure, though, will have to wait. Baby number four is on the way for the Chiaravalle family.

## On the Offense

Check your risk for this stealthy condition.

**Full-blown Type 2 diabetes** has telltale symptoms, but ones that are often overlooked:

- frequent urination
- extreme thirst and weight loss
- cuts that are slow to heal

**Prediabetes** is a silent precursor state that, unchecked, often leads to diabetes. While there are no obvious physical symptoms, says Dr. Borst, there are risk factors:

- Overweight or Obese Age (especially over 45 years old)
- Hispanic or African American ethnicity
- Family history of diabetes



Gretchen Spetz,  
MS, RD, LD  
Nutritionist



Kevin Borst, DO  
Endocrinologist

## History of gestational diabetes

Individuals who meet these risk factors should ask their physicians about screening for prediabetes, says Dr. Borst.

The Lakewood Hospital Diabetes & Endocrine Center offers consultations with Cleveland Clinic endocrinologists, diabetes educators, nurses and dietitians. Learn more at [lakewoodhospital.org/diabetes](http://www.lakewoodhospital.org/diabetes) (<http://www.lakewoodhospital.org/diabetes>).

## Join us at the 6th Annual Diabetes Symposium: Developing a Diabetes Game Plan

Hear Tony's story and learn more on how to form a strong team to help you achieve your diabetes management goals.

Sponsored by the Lakewood Hospital Diabetes and Endocrine Center

**Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2014 4:30 – 8:30 p.m. Dinner included. LaCentre Conference and Banquet Facility,  
Westlake**

To register, visit [lakewoodhospital.org/DiabetesSymposium14](http://www.lakewoodhospital.org/DiabetesSymposium14) (<http://www.lakewoodhospital.org/DiabetesSymposium14>) or call **877.390.1732** (tel:8773901732). Cost is \$10. For more information, call **216.529.5312** (tel:2165295312).