

Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

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*Thoughts
from
Dr. Amy*

Please read this story from *The Spokesman-Review* about Prevention Center for Heart & Brain Health nurse practitioner Brea Seaburg, who recently ran the New York Marathon!

As Brea said:

"I don't want to be defined by this chronic illness."



Despite Type 1 diabetes, local nurse practitioner does NYC marathon with husband, a teacher

By Treva Lind • Originally published Nov. 7, 2023 • Copyright 2023. Reprinted with permission of *The Spokesman-Review*

Brea Seaburg thought she'd never run another marathon after a surprise Type 1 diabetes diagnosis four years ago.

On Sunday, she and her husband Nathan Seaburg broke through that barrier, running together to complete the New York City Marathon.

The Seaburgs have trained since July and say covering the 26.2 miles with Brea's diabetes required planning and carrying extra snacks to keep up her energy. This was the ninth marathon for Nathan, 37, who doesn't have diabetes, and Brea's second.

"It was a nice full-circle moment for me," said Brea, 36. "I ran my first marathon in 2014 without diabetes. It had been a bucket-list item to run the New York City Marathon."

They finished it on the Beyond Type race team, among 50 members who raised dollars in local communities to benefit the Beyond Type 1 nonprofit in support of people with all types of the condition. Prior to leaving last week, the Seaburgs each raised \$3,500, mostly in a September event at The Scoop ice cream shop.

"When I was laying in the hospital bed the day I was diagnosed, I said to Nate, 'Well, I guess I'm not going to run that next marathon,'" Brea said. "It was just a moment of self-pity. I've looked back on that and thought, that's not the person I want to be."

"I don't want to be defined by this chronic illness."

A Spokane nurse practitioner, Brea has long eaten healthy and exercised, so it also was unexpected when, during two pregnancies, she was diagnosed as having gestational diabetes. Her blood sugar levels apparently returned to normal, she said, after their children were born: Nora, 7, and Pete, 5.

A few days past her son's first birthday, Brea had lost weight

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and felt sick. She checked her blood sugar on a glucose monitor, and doctors soon confirmed what she already knew.

"I had never had any issues with blood sugar my whole life, and I don't have any family history of Type 1," she said, adding that she works for the Prevention Center for Heart & Brain Health, in Spokane.

The cause of Type 1 is unknown, but studies indicate it might result from a genetic predisposition, typically combined with an environmental trigger.

Previously called juvenile diabetes, Type 1 does occur in adulthood. It's an autoimmune disorder that makes the body unable to produce insulin, which is the hormone that regulates blood sugar. Without insulin, the body can't use the sugar in the bloodstream as energy.

It differs from Type 2 diabetes, which is an impairment in the way the body regulates and uses blood sugar, or glucose, as a fuel.

The illness requires her to plan and be more aware of her body during a run. She has an insulin pump and a continuous glucose monitor.

"They basically talk to each other, and if my blood sugar gets too low, the pump will shut off," she said.

"If my blood sugar gets too high, then the pump will start giving me more insulin. I truly don't know that training for a marathon with Type 1 diabetes is possible without that kind of technology, so I'm very grateful for it."

Running with Type 1 also means she can't do a spontaneous run, perhaps in a free 30 minutes. She and her husband plan three hours in advance.

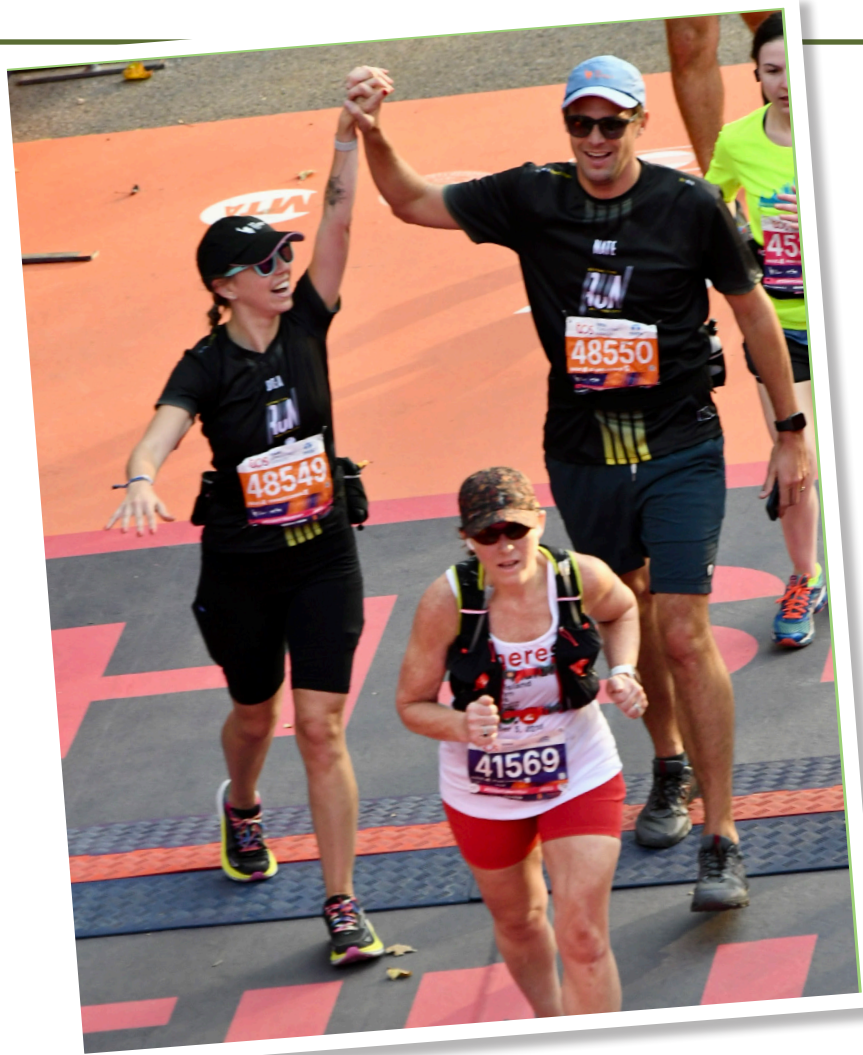
"Because I need to know at what time am I eating, how much insulin is running through my body at that particular time, and I would have had to turn down the amount of insulin that's being delivered," Brea said.

"If I go for run when I have insulin surging through my body from my pump, my blood sugar is going to tank really fast. I have to be really structured."

Nathan, a teacher at the Community School in Spokane, didn't plan to run in the NYC Marathon.

He'd done all the training runs with her up to 20 miles, when someone on the Beyond Type team injured an ankle and couldn't go. They asked him to fill in.

The couple also took their daughter to New York to be with family friends as they ran. Their son stayed home



with grandparents.

Nathan said the marathon helped them raise diabetes awareness, and it offered a way to show their daughter it's possible to get to a goal despite difficulties.

"I think Type 1 diabetes is something that's kind of misunderstood," he said. "It affects how your body turns food into energy, and it's an illness that can happen to anyone at any age anywhere. It's certainly changed how our family approaches even the mundane parts of living."

He said even basic daily actions take planning, whether soccer practice or times to go to bed and wake up. While manageable, preparing for even simple activities can be more complicated.

"That's why we wanted to do the marathon. Brea had already done one, but it's the idea that this diagnosis could come along and we still get to live life to the fullest, we can still go do difficult things, it just takes more planning, he said."

Though Nathan returned to Spokane on Monday, Brea and her daughter planned to enjoy the city with friends for a few days.

From start to a finish in Central Park, his wife ran well, Nathan said in a text Monday.

"Brea killed it – 26.2 miles of equal parts grit, determination and enthusiasm," he said.

Brea credits her husband's support, since she does have to eat periodically while covering the distance.

"That's one of the biggest challenges with running with Type 1, is you are constantly monitoring your blood sugar," she said.

"I'm needing to eat probably every 3 miles throughout the race, so we call Nate my marathon sherpa. He carries all my snacks. I do gel blocks with glucose that are like gummies, then what really helps are pretzels, because of the salt."

And their daughter, who has watched her ups and downs, got to see them cross the finish line.

"It's important to me for her to see her mom be able to do something that's hard," Brea said. "It's important for all kids to know they can do hard things, but especially in terms of the diabetes diagnosis."



In honor of the New York City Marathon, AND Diabetes Awareness month, in November we are featuring a blood-sugar friendlier pizza.

This pizza crust is a cinch and comes together in minutes without needing time for the dough to rise! It's great for Friday Pizza Night, or when craving pizza but want to boost the nutritional value of this favorite food. Jazz it up with your own toppings and include a big salad on the side to balance your plate (and blood sugar). **Enjoy!**

Makes 2 small personal pizzas

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup chickpea flour
- ½ cup arrowroot powder, plus more for sprinkling on top
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup full fat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (optional)
- ½ teaspoon sea salt

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 475 degrees
2. Prepare rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper
3. Mix all ingredients well in a large bowl. Mixture will be thick and sticky
4. Divide mixture roughly in half by scooping dough into two equal (sticky) mounds on parchment lined baking sheet
5. Generously sprinkle arrowroot powder on top of each mound and gently press each into round pizza crusts, about ½-inch thick. If it gets too sticky, add a bit more arrowroot. Do not "over-work" the dough
6. Prior to baking, top your pizza with desired toppings. We love traditional red pizza sauce with sautéed veggies, Italian sausage and mozzarella or feta cheese. Choose your own adventure and use what you've got on hand
7. Place in top third of the pre-heated oven. Bake for about 17-22 minutes, until cheese is melted and crust is slightly puffed and golden brown. Feel free to turn on the broiler for a minute or two to really get the cheese melted and gooey!
8. Let pizzas rest for 5-10 minutes before cutting