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What Michael Mosley learned about type 2 diabetes



Dr Michael Mosley is always pushing to uncover and communicate more truths about type 2 diabetes - the condition that claimed his father's life. Here are three facts he learned when he was in Australia filming his new series.

By

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--- The new landmark series [Australia's Health Revolution with Dr Michael Mosley](#) premieres Wednesday 13 October at 7.30pm on SBS and SBS On Demand. Join the conversation [#AusHealthRevolution](#) ---

For years, the British science journalist, Dr Michael Mosley, has been on a mission to uncover new facts about health, weight loss and our ability to [potentially reverse type 2 diabetes](#).

But, as Dr Mosley reveals to SBS, his public health battle against diabetes and an unhealthy weight has also been a personal one.

In 2012, he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes – a diagnosis that he says was later reversed. Dr Mosley's father also lived with type 2 diabetes and died of complications related to the condition.

“My dad was a lovely man, but not a very healthy one,” Dr Mosley tells SBS. “He struggled with his weight and, in late middle age, developed type 2 diabetes. Despite being on medication, he died at the relatively young age of 74 from complications of the condition, including heart failure and early signs of dementia.

“He tried to follow his doctor’s advice, to go on a low-fat diet, but never succeeded in losing much weight or reducing his blood sugar levels.”

“I feel that if I had known back then what I know now, I could have helped him lose weight and got his blood sugars under better control.”

Herein lies the former doctor’s personal inspiration for learning more to help people struggling with the condition: “I feel that if I had known back then what I know now, I could have helped him lose weight and got his blood sugars under better control. This would have meant he lived a longer and healthier life, one where he would have had more time to watch his grandkids grow up”.

I’m always learning

Of course, Dr Mosley can’t turn back the clock, but he can look ahead and try to assist other people living with type 2 diabetes.

In the new SBS series, *Australia’s Health Revolution with Dr Michael Mosley*, he visits Australia to demonstrate his belief that type 2 diabetes may be reversible. He joins eight Australians struggling with the condition, as they attempt to turn their health around with diet and exercise.

“I was surprised that rates of obesity in Australia are so high.”

In the process of filming this three-part documentary, Dr Mosley learned a lot about the typical Australian diet and the country’s battle against type 2 diabetes. Here are three facts that really took him by surprise.

I didn’t realise how many people in Australia were at risk of type 2 diabetes

Dr Mosley was taken aback by current obesity rates in Australia, which stand in complete contrast to the strong, fit Aussie stereotype floating around the world.

“I was surprised that rates of obesity in Australia are so high,” he tells SBS. “A recent [report by the OECD](#) listed Australia in the [bottom] five countries for obesity rates, higher than only the US, Mexico, New Zealand and Hungary.”

The OECD Health Statistics from 2017 documents obesity among adults aged 15 and over across the world. Japan fared the best in the report, with only 3.7 per cent of its population living with obesity. Meanwhile, 27.9 per cent of Australians are obese. This compares to 38.2 per cent in the United States.

Obesity is a major contributor to type 2 diabetes. [Diabetes Australia](#) estimates that eliminating obesity from the population could potentially reduce the incidence of type 2 diabetes by over 40 per cent.

I discovered some truths about the Australian diet

In episode one of the new series, Dr Mosley puts his body on the line by eating a “fairly typical Aussie diet” to test whether it pushes his blood sugars into the diabetic range.

“I was shocked to discover that around [half the Australian diet](#) is made up of ultra-processed foods, a mixture of junk food, snacks and ready-cooked meals.

According to a recent [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report](#), Australians of all ages do not eat enough of the five food groups and eat too many discretionary foods high in salt, fat and sugar. Less than one-in-10 adults met the recommendations for daily vegetable consumption.

Inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption in particular is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes and obesity as well as other health issues.

“I was shocked to discover that around half the Australian diet is made up of ultra processed foods, a mixture of junk food, snacks and ready cooked meals.”

I was surprised by how quickly a poor diet heightened your type 2 diabetes risk

Although the journalist knew that eating badly would spike his blood sugar, he didn't foresee the extreme impact it would have on his body.

“I suspected before I started that putting myself on a fairly high ultra-processed food diet, that it would be bad for my body and brain. But I was really surprised by how quickly I went downhill.”

Dr Mosley later aims to reverse the damage caused to his body by adopting a low-calorie diet and exercising.

In doing so, he brings the focal question of the series to the forefront: can we really nurture our bodies after eating poorly for so many years and reverse type 2 diabetes by relying on food and exercise alone?

“The thing that I really want to demonstrate is that type 2 diabetes can be reversed,” Dr Mosley says in the series.

“This is still very controversial. A lot of doctors will tell you it's impossible. But I believe it is really possible.”

This story contains general information only. Consult your doctor or medical professional for advice that is suited to your circumstances. If you need assistance with your diet or for dietary advice, always consult a GP, endocrinologist, diabetes educator or Accredited Practising Dietitian.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2021/10/06/what-michael-mosley-learned-about-type-2-diabetes>