



# STUCK

Life wasn't always this way for Sherri and Garry Reid. The couple met 27 years ago in Trenton where they both worked together as security guards. Ten years ago, Garry's health started to take a toll. Garry and Sherri were both living with his mother when the symptoms of diabetes Type 2 became apparent.

"Ma was cutting my toe nails with a pair of scissors," begins Garry. "She was cutting too close to the skin, and the cut led to an infection," Sherri explains.

"My toes then started breaking one by one," says Garry. "I couldn't walk. It started with my big toe, then the third, fourth and fifth. I was in the hospital a fair share."

Eventually Garry had all the toes on his one foot amputated and then three months later, the toes on his left foot "started to act up," as Garry puts it.

Diabetes affects the circulation of blood through insulin. Diabetes is caused by an inability to produce or use insulin. The lack of insulin used to break down glucose (sugar) leads to a build-up of glucose in the blood (hyperglycemia) and leads to complications like poor circulation. It's like the glucose makes the blood more "sticky" and thickens the inner lining of blood vessels.

The hands and feet are usually the first places to be affected since they are furthest away from the heart. The lack of blood circulation to Garry's feet made it more difficult for his body to heal the cuts on his toes.

On Nov. 6, 2001, Garry was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. The next summer, Garry was informed by his doctors that he would have to have his right leg amputated.

"It was like a nightmare. Sherri thought I was joking," says Garry. "Diabetes is one of the worst problems in North America," says holistic nutritionist Ella Markan.

"There is some awareness that people have about it, but there is little understanding what it is. Therefore, I think the problem is still on the rise and is going to get worse," explains Markan.

"About 80 per cent of people with diabetes are Type 2 which is completely preventable or curable. It is so rampant because we have pretty much raped our food."

After 10 years of living with his amputation, Garry has learned to adapt to his condition. However, Garry did not monitor his diabetic condition, and once again, he was admitted into the hospital -- this time to have his left leg amputated.

"Then I had to say goodbye to that leg," Garry was in the hospital for two months recovering from his amputation.

Twice a day, Garry takes metformin for his diabetes as well as two insulin injections. Sherri also has diabetes, but she has Type 1.

"We have had a lot of setbacks. I lost my job, a new car, the capability of working, and then I had to stay at home to be a couch potato," says Garry.

Garry lost his ability to work and is now compensated by Ontario Disability. This has put Sherri out of work as well because you cannot earn more income than you receive from disability.

"If you get caught working, you have to pay back," says Garry. "If I get caught again, we will lose disability," says Sherri.



Top: Garry Reid takes an insulin injection twice a day.

Counterclockwise: Garry Reid shows the scars on his legs where he was amputated just below the knees. "Pills didn't put me to sleep during my surgery for my second leg, so I watched the whole thing," says Reid.



Next: Ginger is one of the two cats that belong to Garry and Sherri Reid. The Reid's cats are pretty much family members and according to Garry, "When you're up or down, they always love you."

Bottom: Garry and Sherri Reid moved into their two-storey home 10 years ago after Garry had his right leg amputated after his diabetes spiraled out of control. Garry sleeps in their living room on the couch since the one bedroom in their home is upstairs.



Photo and Story By Brynn Campbell