



### Michael Bobos

For Christmas of 2007, Michael Bobos didn't want anything. After finding out in January that he did not have type 1 diabetes, Michael had already received the best gift of all and enjoyed the best year of his life. That's because, when he was just 11 days old, Michael's blood sugar spiked to above 500 and he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. For 14 years, he had to endure finger pricks several times a day, give himself insulin injections, and at the age of 10, start wearing an insulin pump. The worst part was that despite his constant efforts, Michael's blood sugar was all over the place. His mother Michelle recalls that his levels were 550 one minute and 50 the next: he was almost never in a normal range. Only much later did they realize the reason: Michael did not have type 1 diabetes, but monogenic diabetes, a much rarer and more recently discovered disease. Unlike type 1 and type 2 diabetes, monogenic diabetes is caused by just a single gene mutation.

Today, Michael's pancreas can produce its own insulin with the help of oral medication. While people with monogenic diabetes still have to test their blood sugar, they do it much less often than people with type 1 diabetes. In short, this disease, which usually only strikes infants, is much easier to treat and live with than type 1 diabetes. Michael's family calls it—and him—their miracle.

Michael feels that living with type 1 diabetes has given him a greater appreciation for health and nutrition. He takes good care of his body because of it. Looking back on life with type 1 diabetes, Michael is optimistic. "It wasn't really that bad because I just felt like a normal kid," he says. "It didn't bother me too much." But of course, now that he knows a new way of life, he'd never go back. Michael's mother is exceedingly proud of the fact that through all the trials and tribulations of being insulin-dependent, her son has remained positive and confident. "He has integrity," she says. "He always wants to do the right thing... and all the strength that he got from being diabetic is still with him."

### Ryan Collins

Ryan Collins of Aldie, Va., was only 10 weeks old when doctors made the diagnosis: type 1 diabetes. That meant up to eight insulin shots per day, a big burden on him and his family.

"He couldn't be anywhere unless there was someone around to give a shot," said his mother, Dana Collins. "Everything had to be planned. There was no impromptu anything." Until April 2008, that is, when Ryan, now almost 11, stopped needing shots.

Ryan, it turns out, does not have type 1 diabetes after all. He has a rare form of diabetes, not yet discovered when he was born, that is caused by a genetic mutation. And it is treatable by a pill. Ryan's story is the latest case of how research is changing doctors' understanding of diabetes. After he tested positive for that mutation, Ryan Collins spent five days in the University of Chicago Medical Center, where doctors gradually substituted the pills for the insulin. Ryan now takes three small pills with breakfast and three with dinner. His body is making insulin again, and his blood sugar is better controlled than when he was taking all those shots. "He's ecstatic," Ms. Collins said. "For this summer, I'm signing him up for summer camp, which he's never been able to do before."

Article by Andrew Council for *The New York Times*

**To read more patient stories, please visit:**  
[monogenicdiabetes.uchicago.edu/personal-stories/](http://monogenicdiabetes.uchicago.edu/personal-stories/)

