

'It's important to make changes': Insights about motivators and enablers of healthy lifestyle modification from young Aboriginal men in Western Australia

Why and how some people have made healthy changes

Why was this study done?

Healthy eating and being active can stop diabetes and other chronic diseases from happening. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have more type 2 diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians, especially in younger age groups. It can be really hard to make healthy changes, and it could be helpful to hear from people who have had success in making healthy changes.

How was this study done?

We talked to younger Aboriginal people who were living in Derby and had made healthy lifestyle changes (mainly having a healthier diet and doing more physical activity). These were changes that help people able to manage their diabetes better, or make them have less chance of getting diabetes. We found four people for this study who shared their stories. They were all men, aged 20–35 years.

Three of the men had diabetes. We asked what changes they had made and why, what made changes easier or harder, what other people said or did when they made changes, and advice or ideas for helping others to make changes.

What did we find out?

The men with diabetes made changes after they found out they had diabetes and understood what diabetes can do. They wanted to look after their diabetes to stop bad things happening from it - like going blind, having a heart attack, going on dialysis, and dying early.

All the men found out more about how to be healthy before they made changes. They were sure they would be able to make the changes and that it would make a good difference to their life. It was hard to make changes at first, so they started small with some changes and kept trying. After they had been doing the changes for a while, it became easier. When they made changes, the men all had support from some other people.

They said they would like other people to know about how to be healthy from a young age, and also understand about the serious health problems that can happen (even at a young age) if people don't do healthy things.

What does this mean?

To make healthy changes, younger people might need to get more knowledge and skills about how to do healthy things and understand why it is important. This includes knowing what diabetes is, what it can do, and how to stop it from happening or getting worse. It could be helpful to have more programs to support people to make healthy lifestyle changes and build up their belief that they can do it. Some people might have too much stress or problems in their life to think much about healthy changes; we need to make things better for people in this way as well.

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