

June 18th, 2008

## Running A Little Sweet

I'm used to doctors high-fiving me after my checkups. I'm a health editor, for crripesakes, so I ought to do well, right? Usually the appointments go quickly, because the white coats don't need to waste breath telling me to eat right, stop smoking, exercise regularly, and watch my weight. I do all that, already. It's practically a job requirement at *Men's Health*.

So anyway, last week I was in for my annual physical, and it did go pretty fast, right up to the ritual reading of the blood-test results. LDL: 56. Whoohoo! HDL: 67 Even bigger woohoo! All of which means I'm immortal, right doc?

Not so fast.

Because then we got to the bad part, where my G.P. somewhat apologetically noted: "Fasting glucose is 110. We better keep an eye on that."

Glucose is blood sugar, and too much blood sugar is the cause of insulin resistance, which is the gateway to hell, otherwise known as diabetes. And in any case, when a doctor tells me to keep an eye on something, it's my practice to train an electron-scanning microscope on the disorder. But in this case, especially so as I consider the risks I'd run if I became diabetic: blindness, impotence, amputation, and hall-of-shame status at *Men's Health*. I'd already managed to be the fittest, skinniest, healthiest guy anybody knew who went through an [angioplasty and stent](#), and now my blood was running a little sweet.

Damn.

Time to press the panic button. First step: Consult with my colleagues at MH. Jeff O'Connell had recently published a terrific, terrifying, poignant story of his own wrestling match with blood sugar and genetic destiny in [The Thin Man's Diabetes](#). His recommendation: Pay a visit to [Keith Berkowitz, M.D.](#), in NYC, for the full battery of tests. And so it is that I awoke a mere five hours after the Celtics celebrated their victory last night, hopped a bus for New York, and opened my veins in the pursuit of answers.

Dr. Berkowitz was on hand to welcome me to the office, and we had an extensive consultation in between blood drawings. He's a specialist in the dilemma of our age:

Why so many of us are being diagnosed with diabetes. There's a five letter answer: S-U-G-A-R. Great mountains of it, in fact, drifting in our drinks, swilling down our throats, gumming up our blood, poisoning our cells. And Dr. Berkowitz has a front row seat on the carnage.

You've heard the expression "If you're a hammer, everything looks like a nail"? Well, if you're Dr. Berkowitz, everything looks like insulin resistance. My insomnia. My heart blockage. The way I wake up to pee at 2AM. The way I have trouble falling back to sleep, and instead ruminate for hours on the Cubs' chances of breaking the World Series drought this fall. (I didn't ask him, but I suspect he thinks that insulin resistance caused Bartman to intercept that foul ball down the left field line during the 2003 playoffs, as well. And you know, if Notorious Steve was on a sugar buzz from an extra large soft drink, he might not have been thinking clearly as the ball and Moises Alou converged on him...)

I don't have my blood test results yet, so I don't know exactly how I fared. But soon I'll be armed with information, along with advice from Dr. B about how I can make that 110 start backing away into the double digits. In fact, so much rests on it. I hope to be fully energized to take to the streets when Kerry Wood nails down the final out next October.