

# Diabetes 'tune-ups'

EXCLUSIVE  
BRIGID O'CONNELL

## Annual health checks for type 2 sufferers

A WORLD-first study is aiming to develop a new set of annual type 2 diabetes health checks – just like a logbook service for a car – to prevent them developing devastating disease complications.

Traditional diabetic side effects such as kidney failure, vision loss and amputations are well checked in the million Australians with the disease.

But it is now emerging that type 2 diabetes increases the risk of other serious illnesses

such as dementia, heart failure and some cancers, and yet it is not known why.

A \$4.8m project led by Melbourne's Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute will follow 3000 adults over a decade to track the progressions of these complications to uncover the risk factors, develop early detection tests and annual health checks, as well as new treatments to revolutionise diabetes care.

Co-lead researcher Jonathan Shaw said given diabetes

was the fastest growing chronic health condition, it was vital that efforts to prevent complications were increased.

"The spectrum of concerns and conditions people bring to their doctors now is different, and we have to understand the extent to which they are linked to diabetes," Prof Shaw said.

"It's been routine in diabetes for 30 years that once a year we should assess what their eyes are like, their kidneys and feet.

"As a diabetes health care professional I need to know; is this my job to help them prevent Alzheimer's disease, or a decline in physical health? Is there something I can be doing in managing their diabetes to assist with this?"

"When you take your car to get it roadworthy, there is a checklist they go through.

"It's the same with diabetes. As we expand our knowledge, we need to consider if we expand our roadworthy test."

About 700 people have been recruited to the PRE-DICT study, which will collect blood and urine samples to probe for predictive markers of risk, analyse previous health records, include a complete physical, psychological and cognitive assessment, and track future health.

Prof Shaw said the National Health and Medical Research Council funding would propel mass enrolment, vital to answering their questions.

"I would love to be able to say to my patients; 'you're in a high-risk group and therefore we have to do everything we can to minimise the risk of something coming,'" he said.

"On the other side, I'd like to be able to say; 'You're low risk, come back in two years'."

"This study gives us this platform to look across the physical, social, behavioural and psychological inputs and outcomes for type 2 diabetes."

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baker.edu.au/research/clinical-trials/diabetes-complications

## HACIA GALLOPS TOWARDS HER RUNNING GOAL

MILES PROUST

WHEN Hacia Atherton suffered a life-changing accident she thought she would never walk, let alone run, ever again.

But defying all odds, she will compete in Run for the Kids on August 29.

The 33-year-old was left with horrific injuries after a horse-riding accident while training for a World Equestrian Games qualifier.

"We were towards the end of the session when she (the horse) reared up and threw me off," Ms Atherton said.

"Then she stumbled backwards and fell down on top of me."

The accident left Ms Atherton's legs "feeling lifeless" and she was flown to The Alfred hospital.

Her devastating injuries included a crushed pelvis, broken hips and nerve damage to her right leg.

"I had a nine-hour surgery to try and put Humpty Dumpty back together again. I woke up from that surgery and was told I may not walk in any meaningful way again."

But with courage and determination she began her arduous recovery, including a six-month hospital stint, 14

operations and countless hours of physio. Four years on, she is taking part in Run for the Kids to raise money for the Royal Children's Hospital and help others through adversity.

"I have been able to push myself through huge barriers to run, I find it so motivating to run for others that need help and support," she said.

She admits the 14.8km run – across the Bolte Bridge, with a shorter 5km family-friendly event also an option – will push her to her limit, but with fiancé Simon and two close friends running with her, she won't be alone.

Ms Atherton encourages others battling illness or injury to relish all victories, no matter how small. "You've got to try to find the opportunity, even in your darkest moments," she said.

"When I was sitting in the hospital and not knowing whether I was going to ever walk again, I took every opportunity to find the joy in life. Whether that was my dad bringing me my dogs or being taken out in a special taxi to go out for dinner."

Sign up for the Herald Sun/Transurban event at [runforthekids.com.au](http://runforthekids.com.au)



After 14 operations to help her walk again after a horseriding accident, Hacia Atherton will take part in Run for the Kids. Picture: Jason Edwards

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**RUN for the KIDS**  
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## Cheating minister falls on sword

BRITAIN'S Health Secretary Matt Hancock has resigned after humiliating footage of him kissing and cuddling a senior aide in breach of coronavirus restrictions was published by The Sun newspaper.

Mr Hancock, 42, who has reportedly walked out on his 15-year marriage over the scandal involving his top aide Gina Coladangelo, announced he would quit in a letter to

Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "We owe it to people who have sacrificed so much in this pandemic to be honest when we have let them down as I have done by breaching the guidance," he wrote.

"The last thing I would want is for my private life to distract attention from the single-minded focus that is leading us out of this crisis," he added.

Mr Johnson said he was

"sorry" to receive Mr Hancock's resignation, and that he should be "immensely proud" of his service.

Mr Johnson had initially stood by his beleaguered health secretary.

Martha Hancock had no idea her husband was having an affair until he broke the news and announced their marriage was over, The Times reported.



Matt Hancock

## Our rellie, Dragon Man

AUSTRALIAN and international researchers believe they may have discovered a new species of human which could be a closer relative than the Neanderthals.

Academics used geochemical procedures to examine an almost perfectly preserved fossil, which they believe belongs to a male, about 50, from a new species

of human called Homo longi or "Dragon Man".

Dragon Man's massive skull could hold a near human-sized brain but had larger, square eye sockets, thick brow ridges, a wide mouth, and oversized teeth.

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