



THE **CrossFit** JOURNAL

# PHYSICIAN: “HE’S BASICALLY CURED HIS DIABETES”

Doctor explains how 48-year-old Pete Katz used diet and CrossFit to stop taking medications for diabetes, high blood pressure and anxiety.

BY ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL





First he changed his diet. Then he started taking classes at CrossFit Painesville. Six months later, Pete Katz was off his medications.

Days before Pete Katz's visits to his primary-care physician, he would go on a diet. It was his vain attempt to nudge his health markers in the right direction.

But the short-lived change had little effect on an increasingly grim reality.

"Pete was in a common situation for many patients in that his weight was not ideal. And early on he did not have significant health problems from that," said Dr. J. Harry Isaacson, Katz's physician of roughly 15 years. Isaacson is also assistant dean for clinical education at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine in Ohio.

"Many people end up crossing a threshold ... where they start to accumulate different health problems from their weight."

For Katz, that threshold was a Type 2 diabetes diagnosis at the age of 41.

"That's a whole different ball game," Isaacson said.

To treat the disease, the doctor prescribed oral medication. After three years, it wasn't enough. So Isaacson prescribed an injectable drug. This was in addition to Katz's treatments for anxiety and high blood pressure.

Injecting himself with medicine and constantly monitoring his insulin put enough fear into Katz that he finally heeded the advice Isaacson had long been giving him: Change your diet and start exercising.

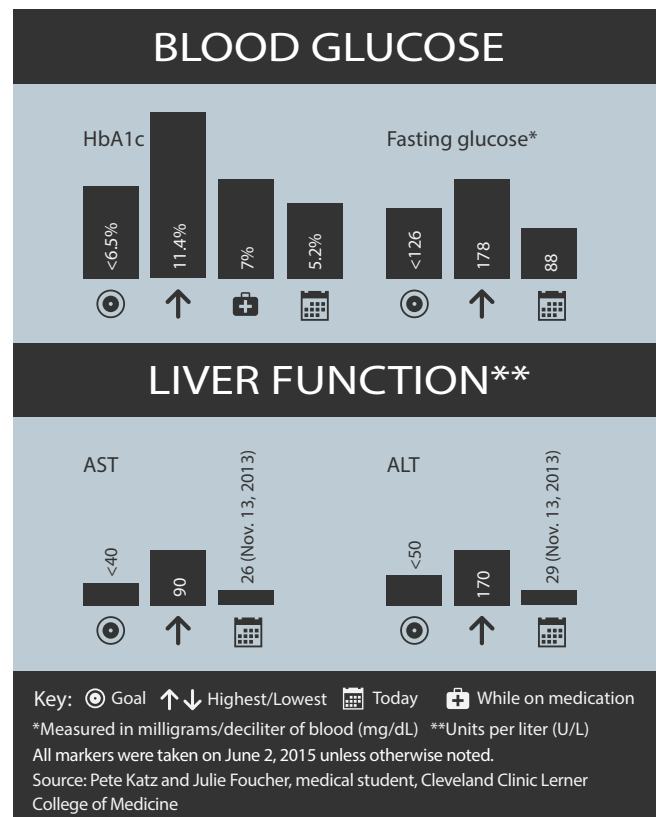
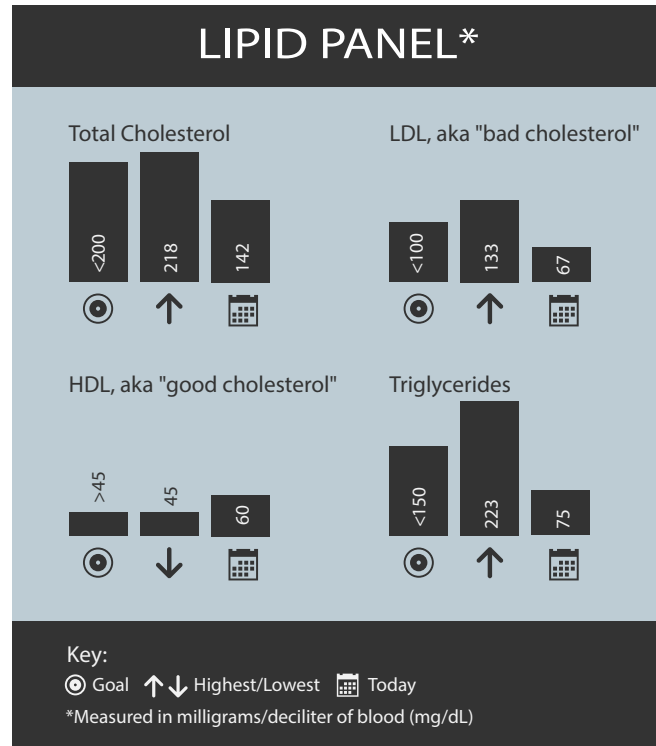
Before then, Katz had tried multiple diets and exercise programs over the years; nothing stuck. This time, he started following the Paleo Diet. About a month later—in November 2012—he had his first class at CrossFit Painesville in Ohio.

Six months after that, Katz was able to discontinue all of his medications.

"He's basically cured his diabetes with his attention to lifestyle," Isaacson said.

He added: "For someone to go off medications and control it, it's quite uncommon, actually."

The doctor called Katz's ability to affect his own health "remarkable."



## Health Markers

### Lipids

**Cholesterol**—Measurement of total cholesterol being transported in the blood.

**LDL**—Measurement of “bad cholesterol”; higher levels are associated with higher cardiovascular risk.

**HDL**—Measurement of “good cholesterol”; can transport cholesterol from body tissue and return it to the liver.

**Triglycerides**—Measurement of triglycerides being transported in the blood. Triglycerides store unused calories and form the major component of the body’s fat tissue.

### Blood Glucose

**HbA1c**—Long-term measurement of glucose circulating in the blood.

**Fasting glucose**—Short-term measurement of glucose circulating in the blood.

### Liver Function

**AST**—Measurement of the enzyme aspartate aminotransferase in the blood. Can be released into the blood when excess accumulation of fat in the liver injures liver cells. AST measurement is compared with ALT to determine the extent of liver damage.

**ALT**—Measurement of the enzyme alanine aminotransferase in the blood. Can be released into the blood when excess accumulation of fat in the liver injures liver cells. ALT measurement is compared with AST to determine the extent of liver damage.

Source: Julie Foucher, medical student, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine



Courtesy of Pete Katz

Before changing his lifestyle, Pete Katz suffered from anxiety, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes.

“The big message is that if you’re faced with a health problem like this, you have an opportunity as a patient to ... have a significant impact.”

Today, Katz is working toward 15 percent body fat and is a coach at CrossFit Painesville.

Julie Foucher, a former CrossFit Games athlete and a medical student at the Lerner College, has known Katz for three years and attributed his success to the accountability he found at his affiliate.

“He has tried a lot of other programs,” she said. “One of the big reasons he was successful was the community.”

Today, 48-year-old Katz looks forward to his visits with Isaacson.

“It is fun to take those tests now.”

The last time he saw the doctor was June 4, 2015. All of his health markers were considerably improved since they were at their worst.

“It works. It’s good medicine,” Katz said.

When asked if he was referring specifically to diet or CrossFit, he replied quickly.

“Both. Like I said, it’s hard to say which it is. But I wouldn’t stop either one ever.” ■

## About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil is assistant managing editor and head writer of the CrossFit Journal.