

The Guardian Angels of Insulin-Treated Diabetics

by Victor Walsh

Abby Sheats, a graduate student in physical therapy at the University of Pacific in Stockton, California, was diagnosed as an insulin-dependent diabetic in 2009 while living in Maui.

She was 25 years old at the time, in the prime of life, but without her usual high-octane energy level and zest for the outdoors.

"It came as a real shock; I was losing weight, and felt terribly weak," she says. "It was a very frightening and humbling experience. There was a lot of fear on my family's part, and my mother would call constantly to see if I was okay since I was living by myself."

Abby is one of more than five million Americans who take insulin to treat their diabetes. Despite significant medical advances and use of battery-powered devices such as insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors, type 1 diabetics still face formidable challenges in keeping blood sugar readings consistently in the normal range.

They live a yo-yo lifestyle that can be exasperating and, at times, life-threatening. Low blood sugars are

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Armstrong, founding dog (2002-2012).