

# Longevity at Risk

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Clouds move in on the normally positive disposition of Dr. Bhavna Vaidya-Tank, founder of the Family Wellness Clinic in Clayton, when she talks about the prospective longevity of too many of today’s children.

“As I’ve noted in past conversations,” she says, “this is the first generation of young people who are projected to have shorter life spans than their parents—a truly sad commentary on many aspects of quality of life for too many children.

“There are many culprits,” she says: “too little exercise, poor fast-food diets, the amount of time children are spending in front of a screen. We’re not cooking; we’re eating poorly. And these changes are happening at such an extended pace that they become the norm, even as we watch people getting fatter—and it is becoming so normal to be heavy, with a body mass index of 32 or 33—the new norm for too many people. Even though a healthy body mass index is actually between 18.5 to 24.9!

“When I tell a patient that their BMI is 32 or 33—which is morbidly obese—they look at me with a sense of wonder: ‘I think I look fine,’ they might say. ‘I look like everyone else.’ Not everyone looks like that, of course—but obesity is more and more common, and it is attacking normal longevity.”

## EXPANDING SERVICES

Dr. Tank is in the process of expanding her medical services to **8020 Creedmoor Road, in Raleigh**, where she plans to offer the same range of services as in her Clayton practice, with an added emphasis on age management and hormone replacement therapies. Opening of the new facility is expected to be in February, 2016. **More information: Telephone: (919) 553-5711.**

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## EPIDEMIC OF DIABETES

“What we are witnessing—globally and locally—is an epidemic of diabetes. The most common form is Type 2 diabetes, or non-insulin dependent diabetes, and it is also called ‘adult onset’ diabetes since it typically develops beyond the mid-thirties—but we are now seeing a growing number of younger people with this critical health condition.

“Normally,” Dr. Tank explains, “when you eat food it gets broken down and turned into a sugar called glucose, which is used for energy within the body. To use glucose properly, your body needs the hormone called insulin, to help take the sugar out of your blood. With Type 2 diabetes, your body either does not produce enough insulin on its own, or the cells in your body don’t use that insulin properly. Instead of using glucose for energy, that sugar stays in your blood—and leads to a range of serious health problems.

“Most often, Type 2 diabetes is seen in patients who are overweight, with a sedentary lifestyle. In the past decade, the number of people living with diabetes increased by nearly 50 percent—to more than 29 million Americans. Worldwide, nearly 380 million people have diabetes, and the World Health Organization predicts that number will double by 2030.

“Today, diabetes takes more lives than AIDS and breast cancer combined—claiming the life of one American every three minutes. It is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, amputations, heart failure, and stroke. In this country, diabetes has an annual price tag of \$245 billion.”

## SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT

And, Dr. Tank points out, there are inspiring success stories.

“I’ve been working for some time with a delightful man, an executive from the Caribbean, well-educated, and also deeply involved in a high-stress job. He came to me for treatment of diabetes. We’ll call him Raul.

“At one point, he tipped the scales at 350 pounds, and then he lost about 100 pounds. He still had diabetes, but the weight loss was a notable achievement. His A1C—an indicator of how well diabetes is controlled—was at 6.5, which is fairly good.



**Dr. Bhavna Vaidya-Tank, passionate in the pursuit of good health.**

Our goal is an A1C of 6 for well-controlled diabetes, or even pre-diabetes. 6.5 or higher is considered to be diabetes.

“Raul was on three or four different medications, one of them being insulin, and other meds for blood pressure and cholesterol. At age 62, he was basically doing fine. But he was still heavy, at about 260 pounds.

“He was also dealing with sleep apnea, and used a CPAP device when sleeping—which he hated, and which, in fact, he used sporadically. And he still had hypertension and lipid issues, but they were well-controlled. And I said to Raul, ‘Overall, things are looking pretty good—but they could be a lot better.’

“It was evident to me” Dr. Tank says, “that this patient still had a problem with food addiction. How else could you be 5’9” and weigh 260 pounds? I encouraged him to believe he could do better. I said this when his A1C started going up, from 6.5 when he first came to see me to 7 and then 7.2 and 7.3. Very revealing. Raul was not dieting well.

“So one day not long ago I said to him, ‘Raul, I just don’t want to do this anymore. You’re such a sweet guy, and I really like you. You have a wonderful wife and she loves you. You want to live long, and you want to live healthy. With diabetes, it’s not a pleasant life. Diabetes is one of those diseases that affects every organ in your body.

“Do you want to control your diabetes, or do you want it to control you? Let’s work with this diet. Let’s get your weight under control.’ And that is what we did. We focused on the weight issue, we did the genetic testing, and we identified the traits that he had which specifically related to food

addiction—which in his case was like being addicted to a narcotic.”

Next, says Dr. Tank, “We put him on certain medications that helped him. We prescribed Naltrexone, which really helps with food addiction, and it changed him and changed his life. We used other supplements, as well. He’s now lost an additional 100 pounds, and he is no longer on insulin supplementation. He’s now taking only one diabetes medication. He is, frankly, doing amazingly well.”

## ADDED QUALITY YEARS

Notes Dr. Tank: “Raul emotionally is always in a pretty good place, and he has probably added 15 years to his life and more importantly, he has made those years of better quality.

“We also provide a lot of supplements that support longevity, such as turmeric, which helps with anti-aging because it is a powerful anti-oxidant—so it is highly effective in Alzheimer’s prevention. It’s also great for reducing inflammation in the body, and it’s great for arthritis—it is, in fact, like a wonder supplement.

“As a result of our work together, Raul found he no longer needs a CPAP device, because with weight loss his sleep apnea condition was greatly improved. Often—not always, but often—sleep apnea is weight-dependent, so losing weight can improve quality of sleep. Often, as well, hormonal changes can improve quality of sleep. If women are menopausal or pre-menopausal, adjusting their hormones with progesterone can help with sleep issues.” h&h