

HOW MANY AMONG US ARE DEALING WITH HEALTH ISSUES? 23 PERCENT OF AMERICANS OVER 60 ARE DIABETIC. ONE IN NINE ADULTS HAS CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE. ONE IN THREE HAS ONE OR MORE TYPES OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE. ONE IN FOUR OF US HAVE AN ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT. 58 MILLION AMERICANS ARE SAID TO BE OVERWEIGHT – 40 MILLION RATED AS OBESE.

HEALTH ISSUES CAN AFFECT YOUR SCORES

SAYS TOM THOMPSON

YOU WON'T SEE A REMINDER LIKE THIS AT EVERY BIG BLAST. WHY NOT – IT'S A GOOD IDEA.



That's a lot of potential for health related issues on every sporting clays course, any day of the week.

Disabilities affecting one's ability to function are certainly present in the shooting population and are a burden to some of us each time we take the field in pursuit of the wily clay bird. Nearly one in five Americans (19%) has some sort of disability. Most such disabilities are not noticeably visible. As we age, disabilities in the population increase in both degree and numbers.

The proliferation of clays carts did not just happen; they are a

necessary adjunct to the game. A squad of Super-Vets depends upon that cart as much as they do the shotgun securely fastened to the floorboard mounted racks. Refusing to concede anything to the aging process, shooters take to the field with a variety of afflictions that range from vision problems, chronic disease, or mobility impairments.

Each one of us has the responsibility to "deal" with our

medical afflictions to enable us to get through the round without a problem to ourselves or, God forbid, to our squad mates. Medications, when used properly, tend to allow most of us to function well on a daily basis. It is up to us to know our limitations, and the potential for side-effects from our

medicines. None of us want to be a burden upon our fellow shooters, but we should all tip off our friends about our potential problems so they can aide us if necessary.

Fatigue, 'just running out of gas', is one of the most common problems on any course. Low blood sugars are often the cause of this general malaise during the second half of a hundred-bird round. Diabetics learn that this problem is likely, and tend to prepare for it – many who have sugar issues but have never been diagnosed sometimes overlook the prospect of exertion related low sugars (hypoglycemia). An energy bar, an apple, banana, or peanut butter crackers will help forestall this problem and likely help you pick up a few targets down the home stretch.

add complications to the body. Expect the nature of the affliction to change over time. Every other diagnosis for the rest of one's life is complicated by diabetes. On any given sporting clays course we are likely to find a significant number of the participants dealing with diabetes at some level. The disorder can lead to heart disease, kidney problems, blindness and nerve damage.

I never leave my problem to someone else to solve. Eating on a

LEFT: WHEN THERE'S A BACK-UP, IT TAKES LONGER TO FINISH THE COURSE. BE PREPARED FOR DEHYDRATION, FATIGUE AND LOW SUGAR LEVELS.

RIGHT: THE '09 US OPEN AVERTED DISASTER WHEN AN UNSEASONAL HEATWAVE CAME UPON IT. THEIR ICE USAGE WENT WAY BEYOND PLANS.



I am diabetic, and have learned the value of maintaining and controlling my glucose levels. Meds are only a portion of my control. Diet and exercise are equally important. While attending tournaments out of town, it's often impossible to stick to the same schedules that keep me in balance at home. Stress is the wild-card in controlling diabetes. Shooting eases my stress levels – your mileage may vary.

Diabetes is a progressive disease, and over time, it tends to

regular schedule is my responsibility. I do not rely on a gun club to be able to meet my need for lunch or a snack. I am prepared when I get to the club, armed with something to carry me through the day. I figure the best way to deal with emergencies is to avoid them!

I always try to have extra energy bars, raisins or trail mix to share with others. Water is vital to all of us, diabetic or not. Dehydration affects us quickly, even when the temperatures are

not high, so keep the body hydrated (and note the location of the porta-potties). Prevention is key – it will take half an hour or more to recover from dehydration or a low blood sugar episode. It will ruin your shoot outing and throw a scare into your squad-mates.

If you have a shooting buddy with diabetes or any other chronic diseases, ask them for possible warning signs and quick fixes. There may come a time when they need your help, and they'll be eternally grateful that you were aware enough to offer the right help. A break in routine or a change in medicine is when problems are likely to surface. I try to keep my squad-mates informed if I'm concerned about any of my conditions.

Several years ago, I had a bout

noticeable occasions. Fluctuating glucose levels will cause temporary changes in your vision. It happens to me more often every year, and it usually happens when my routines are disturbed. A big tournament out of town where my sleep patterns, eating schedule and exercise opportunity are off balance will push up the glucose and it manifests itself in changes to the shape of the eye which distorts vision. Unfortunately, I'm never aware of the changes until I start missing targets!

If diabetes is part of your make-up, you most likely didn't learn much here, you've already come to terms with it, and you know that the way it affects you is not necessarily how it affects others. If you've just been recently diagnosed or suspect that you may be a candidate, pay



with vertigo, which I tolerated for a couple years before it went away. With treatment, it did not limit my activities much, but when it was at its worst, I could not shoot overhead targets. Just tipping my head backward caused me to start spinning, so I'd abandon my normal hold point and wait until the birds got out to 'eye level' before attempting them. I quickly figured out what does not work on overhead targets.

Diabetes has interfered with my shooting on a few other

close attention to advice that will help you get by until you can see your doctor. If you are a shooting buddy of one of the many afflicted, prepare yourself to be a helping hand. Pack an extra bottle of water, a roll of Lifesavers, an apple or an oatmeal bar. Sporting clays is good exercise and does most of us a lot of good, but be sure to follow the advice of your doctor. We can all have fun shooting clays for many years if we stay in shape, know our limits, use medicines properly and watch out for the warning signs. ■