



Doug Gilmour and his mom, Dolly,
who lives with type 2 diabetes

Family **MATTERS**

Former NHLer Doug Gilmour and his team, the Kingston Frontenacs, honour his late father, Don, by starting a charitable organization to raise funds and awareness about diabetes By Anne Bokma

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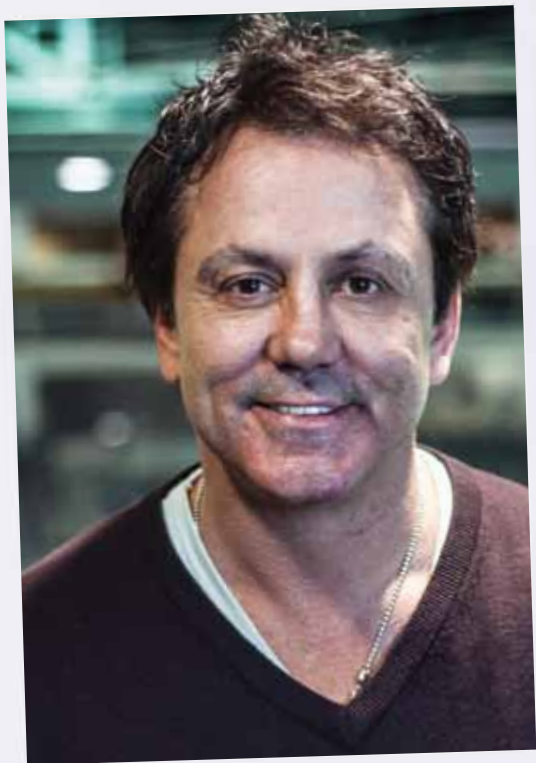
Dolly Gilmour, and her husband, Don, who lived with type 2 diabetes

There's a famous photo of hockey great Doug Gilmour from 1989: he's hoisting the 35-pound Stanley Cup over his head and kissing the silver trophy after scoring the game-winning goal for the Calgary Flames. And there at his right, looking on with pride, is Doug's father, Don, the man who first got him playing minor hockey at age three and who was instrumental in shaping him into the star player he would later become—a hockey Hall-of-Famer who played in the NHL for 20 seasons before retiring in 2003.

"He was always there for me," says Mr. Gilmour of his father, who passed away of diabetes-related complications last fall at age 82 after living with type 2

diabetes for 20 years. "It was a tough time seeing him suffering in the hospital—he was there for four months. It's just not how you want to see your dad."

A well-known sportsman, Don is remembered as a great baseball player who coached many baseball and hockey teams in his hometown of Kingston, Ont., and as a respected correctional officer who worked at the Kingston Penitentiary for more than 30 years. In fact, Mr. Gilmour remembers being recruited as a teenager by his dad to play baseball with the prisoners. "My dad got to know the inmates and would organize the games and order all the equipment. The experience allowed me to meet people from all walks of life."



Now Don is being remembered in another way—through a charitable organization called Fronts Cares, set up by the Kingston Frontenacs hockey team managed by his son. The Frontenacs have partnered with the Canadian Diabetes Association to raise awareness in the community and funds for diabetes research. The team dedicated their recent season to Don's memory, and is also hosting a series of special events, including an end-of-season game. Part of the proceeds of ticket sales from this game will go to the Canadian Diabetes Association.

Having a popular junior hockey team like the Kingston Frontenacs promoting awareness of diabetes will help the Canadian Diabetes Association reach a broader audience and speak to young people who are fans of the team and of hockey in general. "This partnership not only celebrates and honours Doug's father, it will help the Canadian Diabetes Association raise its profile in the community and let people know we are here to help," says Terry Cavanaugh, the Canadian Diabetes Association's regional director,

eastern and northern Ontario, who credits Mr. Gilmour for speaking openly about his father's struggle with diabetes. "It will help others because they won't feel they have to hide the fact that they have diabetes."

"When Doug's father passed away, we felt the need to do something to raise awareness and money for diabetes. Of course, the first group that came to mind was the Canadian Diabetes Association."

— Justin Chenier

Justin Chenier, executive director of business operations for the Frontenacs, echoes that sentiment. "Doug Gilmour is a hockey legend, and people will listen to what he has to say because of his stature in the community. This partnership allows him to take that attention and focus it on something positive by raising awareness about diabetes."

The partnership has received plenty of media attention locally. Trey Wannamaker, a 14-year-old D-Camps ambassador who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was eight years old, was part of the press conference last fall. “I’m really glad to be a part of it, to be helping other kids with diabetes,” says Mr. Wannamaker. “Diabetes is scary, but knowing there are people helping to find a cure makes me excited.” Mr. Gilmour says the 14-year-old left quite an impression on him. “I saw how he deals with living with diabetes every day and what that involves. At the same time, I saw how strong he is.”

The Gilmour family has been deeply affected by diabetes—in addition to his father being diagnosed with the disease, Mr. Gilmour’s mother, Dolly, and his brother, David, also have type 2 diabetes. His maternal grandmother, who lived to be 86, also had diabetes. Mr. Gilmour, who turns 50 in June, and his two sisters, Debbie and Donna, don’t. “I can’t sit here and wonder if and when it will happen to me,” he says. “I try to do the right things by watching what I eat and

“Our partnership with Fronts Cares celebrates and honours Doug’s father. It doesn’t just help us raise money for research; it also increases the visibility of the Canadian Diabetes Association in the community and lets people living with diabetes know we’re here and available to help them.”

— Terry Cavanaugh

exercising—I still play hockey as much as time permits and I work out in my gym at home. But if it happens, I’ll have to deal with it.”

He knows his family history puts him and his four children—who range in age from four to 27—at increased risk of diabetes. But, he says, “We are so much more knowledgeable today when it comes to the importance of diet and exercise and its connection to

Does diabetes **run in your family?**

There are many Canadians like Doug Gilmour whose families have more than one member living with diabetes. While multiple diagnoses mean added stress, “it can be helpful to have someone in the family who understands what you are going through,” says Dr. Ian Blumer, a diabetes specialist in Toronto who works with the Canadian Diabetes Association and is author of *Diabetes for Canadians for Dummies*.

Here are five tips for how to cope:

- 1 DON’T BLAME YOURSELF:** Dr. Blumer says parents can sometimes feel guilty that they may have passed on “bad genes” to their kids with diabetes, but this kind of thinking isn’t helpful. Instead, it’s best to focus on education and awareness to help your children manage the disease as best they can.
- 2 GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED:** Multiple diagnoses can mean multiple worries. Visit the Canadian Diabetes Association’s website at diabetes.ca or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464) to find out about the programs and services that are available to help family members.
- 3 SHARE INFORMATION ON WHAT WORKS:** “Family members can share information from diabetes educators with each other and also motivate each other to eat right and get out and exercise,” says Dr. Blumer.
- 4 SEEK FINANCIAL HELP IF YOU NEED IT:** The financial strain of multiple diagnoses can be a burden since families need more doses of medication and supplies such as blood glucose meters and strips. Be sure to ask your health-care professional about any provincial programs or compassionate care programs from drug companies that can help you save money.
- 5 DON’T SHARE MEDICATIONS:** There may be a temptation to share medications or supplies if one person in the family is running low. This is never a good idea, says Dr. Blumer, because sharing lancets and other supplies may cause infection.



The Gilmour family

diabetes than generations ago. My kids are all in great shape and eat well. I don't want to scare them. But I know we have to keep an eye out because of our family history."

He says his dad was "old school" when it came to dealing with diabetes. "He didn't change a lot of things—he just toughed it up. He certainly never felt sorry for himself." Over the years Don lost much of his vision and he also had a toe amputated. Mr. Gilmour says his mother is managing the disease well and at 82 still has lots of energy. "She's very independent, a real trooper." The two are close. After retiring, Mr. Gilmour moved back to Kingston, and he now lives in a lakeside home just five doors down from the home where he grew up. He talks to his mother every day. For her part, Dolly says her son "always was wonderful with us." She fondly recalls him putting on his first pair of skates and heading out onto the ice when he was just 18 months old. Decades later, she is still by his side, up in the box watching the Kingston Frontenacs play their home games. She's touched by the fact that her son and his

team are stepping up to support the Canadian Diabetes Association through Fronts Cares. "I know it's his way of honouring his father," she says. "I'm so proud he's contributing to the cause."

Did you know?

"The study of the genetics of diabetes and its complications has become very exciting over the past few years, due to the collaborative efforts of the international diabetes community and a focus on genome wide association analysis," says Dr. Andrew P. Borchert in *Recent Developments in Diabetes Genetics in Canadian Diabetes*. To read the complete research article, which looks at the common genetic determinants of diabetes, visit diabetes.ca/genetics.

What role does genetics play?

People whose family members have diabetes are more likely to develop diabetes themselves. The link is very strong for type 2 diabetes and less so for type 1. For example, if you have type 1 diabetes, your brother or sister has a five per cent risk of developing the disease, according to Dr. Ian Blumer, a diabetes specialist in Toronto who works with the Canadian Diabetes Association. However, if your mother or father has

type 2 diabetes, you have a 15 per cent risk of developing the disease—and this increases to a 75 per cent risk if both parents have the disease. The Canadian Diabetes Association's 2008 *Clinical Practice Guidelines* recommend screening every three years in people 40 years and older. For those with additional risk factors for diabetes (for example, a first-degree relative with diabetes), this should happen earlier and more often.