

HOW I REVERSED PREDIABETES

After years of putting herself and her health last, writer Emma Coxon signed up to a 12-week at-home lifestyle programme designed to lower blood sugar, with the metabolic health specialists at Combe Grove.

AS I APPROACHED MY 50th birthday, I knew something had to change. Like many women navigating perimenopause, I felt disconnected from my body. Years of managing an anxiety disorder, medication side effects, and the seismic life shift of becoming a mother at 44 (whilst also wonderful!) had taken their toll. Exercise had slipped out of my life. I'd gained weight, lost energy and, deep down, I knew I needed a new approach – one that was supportive, achievable and rooted in lasting change.

That's when I came across the Combe Grove At Home programme. Run by the Combe Grove estate in Bath – the UK's Centre for Metabolic Health – the 12-week online programme helps people improve their metabolic health through evidence-based lifestyle changes. It focuses on what they call the Five Roots of Metabolic Health: Nutrition, Movement, Sleep, Environment and Mindset. What really caught my attention was its focus on managing blood sugars and reducing the risk of lifestyle-related conditions like type 2 diabetes.

Unlike diet fads, Combe Grove's approach felt holistic. It promised expert support, personalised advice, and the flexibility to make changes in a way that worked with my life. After years of putting my wellbeing on hold, I decided to enrol. It felt like a powerful step in the right direction.

A few days later, a beautiful wooden Welcome Box arrived on my doorstep. Inside were the tools I'd need for the journey, including a

Emma receiving her Combe Grove At Home programme.



Combe Grove in Bath is the UK's first metabolic retreat.

FOOD TRANSFORMATION

Changing my diet transformed my energy and reversed my prediabetes. Here's what an average day now looks like for me:

BEFORE

BREAKFAST: White toast with jam and a milky coffee

LUNCH: Cheese sandwich, crisps and a couple of biscuits

DINNER: Pasta with creamy sauce and garlic bread.

NOW

BREAKFAST: Scrambled eggs with spinach and avocado; herbal tea

LUNCH: Grilled salmon salad with olive oil and seeds

DINNER: Lentil and vegetable stew with leafy greens and roasted cauliflower

blood pressure monitor, body composition scales, resistance bands, a wellness journal, a Cornish seaweed bath soak, a Robert Welch measuring spoon, resistance bands and a Neal's Yard relaxation roll-on. These weren't gimmicks – they were high-quality, practical tools that made me feel equipped and supported from day one.

I set up the online portal, recorded my weight and other metrics, and was paired with my metabolic health coach, Amanda. From the beginning, Amanda's warmth, knowledge, and encouragement gave me confidence. Through bi-weekly live webinars, regular check-ins, and a digital platform to track everything from food to mood, I felt guided every step of the way. The resources were visually appealing and practical, making it easy to stay on track.

One of the programme's first steps was a home blood test through Thriava. My results shocked me: my HbA1c was 43 mmol/mol, putting me in the prediabetic range. It was worrying but validating – I hadn't been imagining the sluggishness or cravings. My body was struggling to regulate its blood sugar, and I needed to act. Seeing that number triggered a quiet determination. I didn't want to rely on medication or suffer a decline. I wanted to take control.



Journaling has helped keep Emma on track.

THE IMPORTANCE OF METABOLIC HEALTH

Metabolic health refers to how efficiently your body produces and uses energy at the cellular level. When blood sugar is well-regulated, cells can use glucose effectively as fuel. But when sugar levels are consistently high, cells lose sensitivity to insulin, the hormone that helps glucose enter cells. This can lead to fatigue, brain fog, weight gain, and chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes. Fortunately, this shift can be reversible with the right lifestyle changes.

The Combe Grove programme is built on the principle that small, consistent changes can lead to long-term improvements in metabolic health. Over the 12 weeks, we worked through each of the Five Roots, gradually introducing new habits into my daily life.

Nutrition was a central focus. Amanda taught me to balance meals with protein,

healthy fats, fibre, and low-glycaemic carbohydrates. I prioritised whole foods: leafy greens, berries, legumes, fish, eggs, nuts, and seeds. I learned to read food labels carefully, became aware of hidden sugars in "healthy" snacks, and started preparing meals with intention rather than quick fixes.

As someone who'd previously felt ruled by cravings, this shift was empowering. I noticed how certain foods made me feel steady, light, and energised, while others left me feeling flat. This wasn't about restriction – it was about nourishment and awareness.

Movement was another key pillar. I'd gone from walking five miles a day to barely moving, and the thought of exercising again felt daunting. But Combe Grove's approach was gentle and adaptable. I started with short walks and added weekly swims – something I hadn't done in years. Slowly, I felt stronger and more in tune with my body. The resistance bands came in handy for strength sessions, and I no longer felt intimidated by movement.

Sleep became a focus around week eight. I realised how little attention I'd paid to rest and recovery. Late-night phone scrolling, erratic bedtimes, and stress were taking a toll on my blood sugar and wellbeing. I started winding down earlier, putting my phone down before bed, and occasionally soaking in a seaweed bath – a ritual that brought me calm. The sleep module reminded me that recovery isn't a luxury – it's a key part of metabolic health.

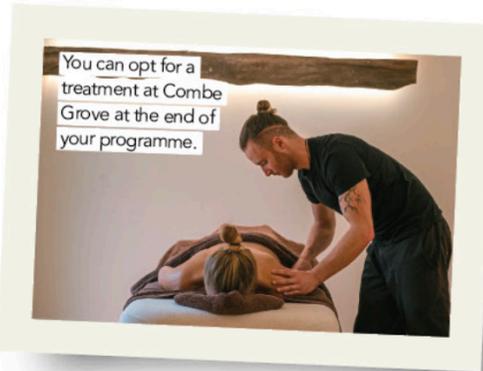
COMMUNITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the most powerful aspects of the programme was the sense of community. Our group of participants met regularly via live sessions to share wins, struggles and questions. Amanda fostered a warm, open environment where we celebrated each other's progress and supported one another when motivation waned.

Having consistent accountability, alongside personal support from Amanda, kept me going. I'd tried health programmes in the past, but this was different. It wasn't about pushing myself to extremes; it was about reconnecting with what my body needed to thrive.

By April, 12-weeks after I'd began, I had my second blood test. When the results came in, I was overjoyed. My HbA1c had dropped to 38 mmol/mol – back in the healthy range.

The Combe Grove At Home 12-week programme costs £1,200. Find out more at combegrove.com/at-home-programme.



You can opt for a treatment at Combe Grove at the end of your programme.

I hadn't lost a huge amount of weight, but my body was healing and responding with the right inputs. It felt incredible to see such a measurable result and know that I'd created this change by simply showing up. It was also a reminder: we can take control of our health. The tools are there; we just need the right support to use them.

A WELLBEING RITUAL TO REMEMBER

As a bonus, the programme included a voucher for a treatment at Neal's Yard Remedies or with one of Combe Grove's excellent health practitioners. I chose a full-body massage, the perfect way to mark the end of the 12 weeks: a moment of relaxation aligned with the programme's emphasis on stress reduction and self-care.

Now that the programme has ended, I feel equipped with the tools and knowledge to continue this journey. I've learned that consistency – not perfection – is the goal. I'm more mindful of what I eat, how I move, and how I rest. I'm also considering growing some of my own food and creating a healthier environment for my family. My daughter loves the idea of helping in the garden, and it's something I know we can do together.

The beauty of the At Home format is that it helps you confront the real-life barriers to better health – the distractions, habits, and excuses – and gives you the structure and support to work through them. It's not about retreating from life; it's about improving it from the inside out.

If you're feeling out of step with your health, or concerned about blood sugars, I can honestly say this programme is a lifeline. It's thoughtful, science-backed, and grounded in kindness. It changed my relationship with food, movement, and most of all, self-care.

Most importantly, it reminded me that midlife doesn't have to be a decline. It can be a turning point.