

## Inspiring Change: A Patient's Journey to Wellness

The editors of *AFP* welcome submissions for Close-ups. Guidelines for contributing to this feature can be found in the Authors' Guide at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/> authors.

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A collection of Close-ups published in *AFP* is available at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/closeups>.

Two years ago, after an annual exam, my family doctor called me to discuss my recent lab results. He told me that my blood sugar levels were consistent with prediabetes. My LDL cholesterol had risen, and my HDL cholesterol had dropped below 40 mg per dL. He warned me that if I didn't change my habits I would soon be starting medication for diabetes, not to mention cholesterol. When I heard this news, the lightbulb finally went off in my head. I was killing myself slowly with too much food. I wasn't going to take medication for something that I could control myself.

As the next month began, I changed my life for the better. I started a weight loss program and was working out six days a week. After six months of eating a healthy diet and exercising faithfully, I lost 49 lb. When I followed up with my doctor for repeat blood tests, he gave me great news. My blood sugar and cholesterol levels were now in the normal range, and my HDL level had risen above 40 mg per dL.

Since I made up my mind to make permanent lifestyle changes, I have lost a total of 110 lb and feel better than ever. No more prediabetes, no more back or knee problems, and no more acid reflux. Some steps that helped me achieve my goal were admitting that I was overweight, consulting with my doctor about healthy weight loss programs, committing to a weight loss program, and keeping an open mind. It is important to stay focused until the end. Weight loss is a long journey that will yield better health and a longer life.

I thank my family doctor for his caring attitude and constant encouragement during my journey. He made me believe that I could make a permanent lifestyle change for the better! —R.M.



### COMMENTARY

R.M. has been a source of inspiration to me during my family medicine residency training. Often, we counsel our patients to modify their lifestyles only to share in their discouragement regarding the intractability of their chronic medical conditions. R.M. was able to make incredible lifestyle changes and reverse his progressive metabolic syndrome. Although transformations of this magnitude are uncommon, it reminds me that change is possible in patients and ourselves.

RILEY J. BURKE, DO

### RESOURCES

American Heart Association  
[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/WeightManagement/Weight-Management\\_UCM\\_001081\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/WeightManagement/Weight-Management_UCM_001081_SubHomePage.jsp)

FamilyDoctor.org  
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/food-nutrition/weight-loss.html>

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov>

Weight-Control Information Network  
<http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/index.htm> ■