Losing Weight, Gaining Wisdom

After years of being heavy, in poor health and on prescription meds, 61-year-old Earni Young radically rebuilt her life.

February 29, 2008 By Kimberly Garrison

Warning Signs

I realized that my weight was a problem a little over a year ago, as I approached my 60th birthday. I went in for my annual physical and found out I was borderline diabetic, had high cholesterol and my blood pressure was out of control. Even though I was already taking 20 milligrams of blood pressure medi-cation daily, the doctor was going to increase my dose. That's when I realized if I didn't do something, I was going to be a sick old lady.

Shaping Up

At the same time, a group of us went to the Montreal Jazz Festival. Later, I saw a photo of myself from the trip, and I was appalled. I knew I had to make a drastic lifestyle change. Some of my colleagues knew a trainer who they thought would be a good match for me. She created a program that covered cardiovascular health, flexibility, balance, weight training, diet and nutrition. Now I exercise most days for an hour to 90 minutes. Along with daily cardiovascular work, I do strength training three times a week. It's a challenge, and some days my arthritis acts up. But overall, I have fewer aches and pains.

I Am What I Eat

I've also learned how to eat the foods I love without breaking my caloric budget. I make delicious meals like kale soup and spinach egg white omelets with low-fat cheese. Food does not have to be fattening in order to taste good.

A Whole New World

My outlook on life has improved. I feel 20 years younger. I went from a size 18 to a size 6! My blood pressure meds have been cut in half, and my doctor says I may be able to come off the meds completely at my next annual exam. I know now that the next 20 to 30 years can be good ones. And, of course, I look good in a pair of jeans!

Name Earni Young
Age 61
Height 5'4"
Weight before 240

Weight after 142
Blood pressure before 140/90
Blood pressure after 118/80
How she did it Strength and cardio-vascular training, and mealtime portion control (1,200 calories a day)

Earni’s Keys to Success

- Don’t listen to your friends who say you don’t need to lose weight or “Girl, you look good,” even when you don’t. Even friends who love you can sabotage your health unknowingly.
- Don’t buy the bad stuff and bring it in the house. You will eat it! Now I think about food in a healthy way. I buy healthy items and try to manage my portions.
- The most important thing to do is move. Diet alone is not going to do it. You need to strength-train. I love being toned and strong!

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