

## Featured WellStory!!

When I first began participating in the wellness program I found out that I had very high cholesterol. I was 25 years old when I had that first lipid panel done and the results came as a huge surprise to me. All of my cholesterol numbers were double what they should have been. I was a little overweight, but otherwise completely healthy. I felt fine, I looked fine and I didn't think there was anything wrong with me health-wise. My regular physician had never even brought up doing a lipid panel on me. I think because I was young and appeared healthy.

I now know that looks can be deceiving. After learning about my insanely high cholesterol levels I did some investigating. It turns out that ALL four of my grandparents are on cholesterol medications. I had no idea that this disease was running rampant throughout my entire family. This not only shows the importance of regular check-ups, but also knowing your family history so you can prompt your physician to check for problems that may be hereditary.

That first year, I participated in the wellness program in order to earn the wellness bonuses, but knew I had to do something to improve my cholesterol. But change is hard and it was really hard to change my habits.

The first big change that I made was small. I made a conscious effort to cook with less butter and cheese. I was pretty successful! I didn't have to buy a new bag of cheese each week so that was a good indication that I was taking a step in the right direction. I also attempted to cut back on my soda intake but that was not as successful.

I knew in the back of my mind that if I could get into a regular exercise routine I would be set for life! I went in spurts where I would bike and walk for a few weeks then stop because the couch was just too inviting after work.

After my miniscule (but difficult to make) changes that first year, I believe my cholesterol went down very slightly. It was no longer in the double range, putting me in the very high risk categories. I was down to only being high risk for heart disease.

The second year continued on much like the first. I tried to quit drinking soda; I tried to work out regularly but it all kind of fell by the wayside. I started reading labels a little bit more and watching for high cholesterol and high sodium items. I armed myself with information even though I chose not to put most of it into practice.

The third year I purchased an elliptical and thought that it would help me finally get into a workout routine! I brought that baby home, set it up and admired it dreaming of all the weight it was going to burn right off my body! As we all know it isn't that simple. I started out slow because that is what all

the articles say. You aren't supposed to over-do it so I didn't. My goal was to run on the elliptical one time a week, then 2 times per week and so on and so forth until I built up to an acceptable amount of exercise per week. This exercise goal ended up falling somewhat flat within the first couple of months just like any other time I tried working out.

Then the spring wellness challenge began. To earn points during the challenge you could download a wellness app. I did some research and found the free app called My Fitness Pal. It could track everything for you, from your calorie intake to your calories burned through exercise. I really liked that I could scan food products with my phone and input my meals. I began using the app RELIGIOUSLY. I would put every food item that went into my mouth into my app. I wore my pedometer daily and calculated those calories into the equation. I had chosen to lose one or two pounds per week and the app would calculate exactly how many calories I could have in a day and lose weight.

That app kicked my butt into gear! I stopped drinking soda on a regular basis, I began eating normal portion sizes and the weight began falling off of me. I walked, biked, ran on the elliptical, or did weight training exercises 5 days per week from April through September of 2015. I felt the best I have felt in years because I was 110% successful! I tracked on My Fitness Pal for over 190 days straight, I never missed an entry! After September I unfortunately slumped back into my old routine of not working out. I continued to eat healthier and smaller portions but I just couldn't seem to maintain an exercise routine.

When I had my lipid panel done that year I was pleasantly surprised to see that all of my hard work had paid off! All of my levels were just a touch above normal range and my good cholesterol was in the range that it should be! And I lost 35 pounds!

Enter year four, 2016. Over the winter I continued my procrastination of exercise. I had a max weight in mind not to go over and that was my ultimate goal. Forming a solid exercise routine that I would STICK TO was my other goal. It is now September and I am trying really hard to get back on track with working out. I worked out once this week and once last week so that is a step in the right direction, now I just need to keep the momentum going. I have also noticed recently that I am slipping back into my old habits of overeating. I think I will be re-downloading the My Fitness Pal app since it was such a good motivator for me last year. I have been maintaining my weight so far into this year. I am now healthy and I have the numbers to prove it! Besides maintaining my current weight into the foreseeable future, my main goal in life is to come up with an exercise routine that I will stick with and not swap out for the couch and TV. I just need to keep telling myself how much better I feel and look when I exercise regularly and hopefully someday I will stick to it! The risk of having a heart attack or a stroke because of high cholesterol is a fear that also lurks in the back of my mind so that is another good reason to get on track and stay on track!

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