

Success story

North York woman sheds more than a third of her body weight

Kristen Sheffer has lost 120 pounds over the past 15 months.

By KATIE MARKEY MCLAUGHLIN for Smart
Photos by KATE PENN for Smart

Attempting to lose weight was nothing new for Kristen Sheffer, 31.

"I was overweight my whole life," she said. "I tried Weight Watchers here and there, then the Atkins diet, but nothing seemed to work."

Nothing, that is, until she connected with WellSpan Medical Weight Management. In the 15 months since her first session with the physician-guided program, Sheffer has lost 120 pounds through a combination of healthy eating, exercise and lifestyle changes.

"I finally realized I needed to take better care of myself," she said.

Life before weight loss

Prior to her successful weight loss journey, Sheffer would often find herself eating out of boredom.

"I didn't get out very much, so I would just sit and eat," she said.

Living alone made it especially difficult to lose weight, since there was no one around to see if she went back for seconds or even thirds. At her heaviest, she weighed 343 pounds.

Then Sheffer broke her ankle and was forced to move in with her parents. She had trouble getting around and was confined to a wheelchair for several weeks.

"It was a really hard time for me," she said.

So when her dad gave her a pamphlet on WellSpan Medical Weight Management, she decided to attend an informational meeting.

Little did she know, she was about to embark on a life-changing weight loss journey that would result in her losing more than a third of her body weight.

A turning point

Sheffer began meeting with Dr. Minnie Taw, a physician with WellSpan Medical Weight Management, who encouraged her to take a practical approach to weight loss.

"When Kristen came on board, she had expectations that were realistic," Taw said. "Getting to a certain weight didn't happen overnight, so it's not going to come off overnight either."



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Before



Kristen Sheffer makes Mediterranean chicken at her home in North York. Sheffer has shed more than a third of her body weight.

Taw encouraged Sheffer to keep a daily log of her food and exercise, and to be honest about everything she ate, even if it wasn't perfect or she "cheated" on her diet.

"She's really supportive," Sheffer said of Taw. "She definitely holds you accountable, but doesn't make you feel guilty about what you ate."

To jump-start her weight loss, Sheffer started on a diet of mostly protein shakes and bars, and it wasn't long before she noticed her clothes were getting too big.

"That really got me motivated!" she said. Taw then helped her transition to a healthy diet of lean protein paired with lots of fruits and vegetables.

Sheffer also started walking with her coworkers over her lunch break.

Staying motivated

"Before I was so heavy that exercise was uncomfortable," she said. "Now that I'm thinner, it's easier and more fun."

Taw stressed that for as difficult as losing

weight can be, maintaining it can be even harder.

"I always say successful weight loss is not only losing it but also keeping it off," she said.

From the start Sheffer decided to stop yo-yo dieting and instead make lifelong changes.

She hopes to lose another 40 to 60 pounds, and then maintain the weight loss by staying active and continuing to monitor her food intake.

To stay motivated, Sheffer reminds herself that being healthy is a continuous process.

She doesn't get discouraged if she eats one unhealthy meal or if the scale doesn't move as fast as she hoped.

Instead, she thinks about the many physical and emotional benefits she's gained from losing weight.

"A lot of people have said I seem much happier," she said. "And they're right. I know I'm happier now."

Weight loss tips

Looking to lose a significant amount of weight? Here are some steps Kristen Sheffer of North York has taken to shed the pounds.

- **Don't drink your calories.** Sheffer avoids the excess sugar and "empty calories" in beverages such as soda and alcohol, and instead sticks to water and unsweetened tea.
- **Cook ahead of time.** Preparing her meals and snacks on the weekends allows Sheffer to make healthy choices even when she's busy during the week.
- **Eat more veggies.** Doubling her portion of veggies helps Sheffer feel more satisfied on fewer calories.
- **Find an exercise partner.** Sheffer walks with her friends and coworkers, which makes exercise social and more fun.
- **Go high tech.** Modern technology makes logging food and exercise easier than ever before. Sheffer likes to use the MyFitnessPal app on her smartphone to track her meals and physical activity.

Online

Read more inspiring 100-plus pound weight loss stories at ydr.com. Search for "Gruver Fitness."