

taking charge of your

# Health & Fitness

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I am sure you have all heard the expression: “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.” It’s a great expression when you apply it to taking charge of your health and fitness. Another good expression is: “You are what you eat.” Eight years ago I made a decision to start taking better care of myself and I have never looked back. I believed then and still do that it was a lifestyle change — a permanent change. I could never go back to eating the way I use to. I had to

take a hard look at my lifestyle and the bad habits I had developed. I wanted to start physically feeling better and I knew in order to do that I needed to take charge through diet and exercise.

Making a decision to change the behavior, i.e., eating and exercise habits was the easy part but actually working up a plan on how to change the behavior and implementing that plan was “much” more difficult.

My first plan of attack was to begin by lifting weights, but I had never worked out at a gym before. I knew nothing about the exercise equipment and was always intimidated by the whole “gym thing.” I met with a staff member at a base gym and had her educate me on the weight equipment, adjustments, and how each piece of equipment worked and the muscle group each machine targeted. The next thing I did was attend a 6-week health and wellness seminar put on by the Wellness Center on base. Boy was that an eye opener. I learned that what I thought was a serving was in fact two or more servings. I was consuming too many calories each day and did nothing to burn them off.

Armed with the knowledge about exercise and diet, I began to take charge of my health and fitness. The staff member at the gym encouraged me to begin keeping a journal of my weight

training and the educator at the Wellness Center also encouraged me to keep a food journal. Slowly over the next year my journal showed great progress reflecting the gradual weight adjustments I made to each piece of equipment and the weekly tracking I did to document my progress. Not only did I begin to feel better, I had much more energy, and mentally, my attitude about life was “much” improved. I was taking charge and the empowerment of taking back control of my health and wellness felt great. The real benefit of keeping a journal is that it validated my progress (at least visually on paper). Physically I began to see changes in my shape as well. I began to tone up and had a little muscle definition in areas I never had before.

On the nutritional side of this plan, I also began to take a hard look at what I was eating. In the past, when I would eat out, I made the best of it. I was always treating it like I was celebrating something and treating myself to some good ole fattening, delicious, high calorie goodies. I ordered whatever my heart desired and usually made poor nutritional choices. Now, on most occasions (not all) I try to make the sensible choices. My weakness is Mexican food and all my friends know it. I sacrifice the cheese and sour cream (on most occasions). I still eat the chips and salsa but not as many as I use to. My favorite expression is: “If I eat it today, I wear it on my thighs tomorrow.” So when I go out to eat now, I think about the high calories in particular foods and try to do my best to select the healthier items from the menu.

It feels good to take charge of my health. I feel stronger, I sleep better, and my attitude about life is “much” improved. Taking charge of your health and wellness is empowering. Make a commitment to change your exercise and eating habits. Make a lifestyle change. You’ll be glad you did. ▶

