

MAXIE'S CHALLENGE



It's hard to believe it has been a year since I launched the Maxie Challenge. You've watched me as I've tried to make permanent changes to the way I eat and move my body. And, I have to say, I have more energy, I'm sleeping better and I just feel better. Best of all, I got a great report from my doctor recently. My cholesterol dropped a bunch this year and the rest of my lab values improved significantly. All from the little changes I made.

Where has all this brought me? I have lost 34 pounds in the last twelve months, dropped my overall cholesterol to 122 from 207, took my LDL to 60 from 140, and improved my fitness and outlook on life. And if I can do it, anyone can.

Here are a few lessons I've learned in the last year, some big things and some little things.

1. Don't be afraid of new vegetables. For instance, I've discovered that I love red, yellow and orange peppers. I'd only tried green peppers before this year. I sauté them with onions and use them in dishes like greens and casseroles.
2. I don't have to boil greens, like collards and mustard, for an hour for them to

taste good. If I sauté them until they are bright green, they taste better and are better for me. And speaking of greens, I've discovered kale (don't turn your nose up — see #1). Cheap and very nutritious.

3. I bought my first head of fresh garlic this year and found out how much seasonings can make a so-so dinner into something fantastic. This is from a guy who only used salt and pepper.
4. My meals used to consist of mostly meat and potatoes. Since I eat more vegetables now, I eat less meat and that makes me feel lighter. The body has to work hard to digest meat.
5. I still eat fast food, but I go for the healthier choices. If I go to a wings place, I order a salad and a few wings, not a plate of wings. I'm still satisfied.
6. I'm more aware of whole grains. White rice and bread have been replaced with brown rice and 100 percent whole wheat bread. (And look at the label to make sure it says 100 percent — the manufacturers try to fool you.)
7. It doesn't take a fancy gym to exercise (although it would help when the



Last November (above), Maxie Bishop challenged himself to eat better foods and exercise (mostly walking) most days. He's stuck to it and it shows: he dropped 34 pounds (left) and his cholesterol plummeted.

temperature climbs above 105!). I found that I could exercise most of the time by simply walking my neighborhood. When the thermometer climbs too high or dips too low, I go to the mall or walk early in the morning or late at night.

8. There are many excuses when it comes to exercise, and I thought of quite a few of them. To make it harder to find an excuse, I'd lay my workout clothes out on the bed before I left for work in the morning if I was doing an afternoon walk. For a morning walk, I'd put out my clothes the night before.
9. An exercise routine is important for me because if I don't stick to a routine, I tend to stop. Now I figure out in the morning (or the night before) how I'm going to exercise the next day, even if a fifteen-minute walk at lunch is the only time I can spare. When I began walking the neighborhood, I would walk for twenty minutes or so in any direction. I figured out that I like to have a defined route better, so now I walk the same route each time so I can tell when I'm improving.
10. It's okay to eat some cake. I've found there are days when I just want to eat sweets (like one of my several birthday cakes). The next day, I just go back to healthier fare.

And here's my challenge to you: Try eating more vegetables (the more colorful, the better) and walking just 20 minutes a day for one month. I promise you'll feel better. And let me know how you're doing at maxie. bishop@dshs.state.tx.us.