

## Jane's Story:

As a health communications professional, I was used to telling the public how to eat healthy and to be active. But I wasn't practicing what I was preaching to the public. Last year, I finally realized, "Jane, you've got to Check Your Health!"

My family health history is full of heart disease and cancer – both conditions that are linked directly to smoking. My father and his father died at the age of 58 from an aneurism. Both were smokers and were significantly overweight. My mother's father, 80, and her younger sister, 57, also a smoker, died from cancer. I realized that time was running out for me. I knew I needed to make some serious changes if I had any hope of having a quality life past the age of 58. I was in my early 40s and already starting to see how my bad habits were affecting my health.

It took me three tries in 5 years, but after 28 years of lighting up, I finally quit smoking for good last year. Six months and 15 pounds later I knew that it was time to get off the couch and get moving. I needed to reverse some of the damage I had done to my body. My cholesterol and triglyceride levels were too high and my doctor was threatening to put me on more medication. I had already been taking meds for high blood pressure and didn't want to take any more if I could help it.

So, off to the gym I went. It was agony! Getting up at five every morning to sweat on a treadmill was the last thing I wanted to do. I was feeling like a hamster on a wheel and I grumbled through every minute of it. However, after about 3 months it didn't hurt so much. I could breathe easier, my muscles were gaining strength and I was feeling better mentally, and physically. That gave me motivation to take it one step further and bring in reinforcements.

I am lazy by nature. I would much rather curl up on the couch with a good book than be physically active. So, I knew that I needed make a fitness commitment to someone other than my spouse or myself. I chose to use a trainer – a former U. S. Marine – someone who would kick my butt if I started slacking off. He helped me craft a workout plan for strength training and cardio fitness from the Check Your Health "[Workouts on the Web](#)." I've been using the plan for about two months now and am already feeling stronger and looking better. But, I also knew that I needed to change my eating habits if I really wanted to make a difference in my health.

I have been on the "see-food" diet for years. I see it; I eat it. As a result, my Body Mass Index is well into the "Overweight" category. To make matters worse, I had packed on another 15 pounds when I quit smoking. It was time to make a

change. I learned that one of my good friends was considering joining a weight loss program. We decided to do it together and support each other through the process. I've managed to lose about 1.5 pounds per week, and am feeling really good about my progress so far. My pants are even feeling looser! The program counselors and the Check Your Health website helped me to see that even though I was making healthy food choices and cooking in a healthful fashion, I was eating *way* too much food. My portion control was virtually non-existent. I had to learn to use smaller plates, to weigh and measure my servings and to be more aware of my hunger signals before eating a morsel. It's working, but I know my body won't be transformed overnight.

Putting my words into action has made a big difference in my health. In one year, my cholesterol and triglyceride levels have returned to the normal ranges. I am physically active 4-6 days per week; I eat healthy foods and treat myself with non-food rewards. Most importantly, these small changes have helped to raise my self-esteem and have inspired my husband and best friend to make changes in their lives as well. It really does pay to Check Your Health!