

I am Now Living a Normal, Healthy and Happy Life

Bariatric surgery patient Beverly Rasich Harrison



As far back as I can remember I was always overweight or obese. I was diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

I **had** been a diabetic for 18 years. The key word is **had**. Initially, when I was diagnosed, I took pills. However, I eventually progressed to insulin injections for the last 10 years.

As my diabetes was becoming uncontrollable, I wondered if I was destined to inherit my father's health problems. My father had bilateral below the knee amputations as well as cardiac and respiratory issues. His brother, my uncle, also had one leg amputated—all related to diabetes. This was starting to scare me.

Trying to exercise and watching what I ate didn't bring my blood sugar down. It only resulted in the yo-yo effect. My sister went to a St. Luke's Bariatric Informational Seminar and encouraged me to attend as well. As my blood sugars increased, I thought I better go and listen. After much soul-searching, I thought why not! I attended the meetings, read my binder, fulfilled all my pre-op requirements and made the decision that would change my life.

My sister and I decided to do this together. We had the surgery on July 25, 2011. We were each other's support. On July 26' I had three units of insulin in the



morning and that is the **last** time I needed insulin or diabetic meds. My blood sugar is normal! I do not miss sticking my fingers four times a day for blood sugar values OR taking insulin twice a day. My family doctor was also very supportive of my decision and is very happy with my medical status. I no longer take high blood pressure or cholesterol medicines either.

When I went to see Dr. Claros in May 2011, I was 231 pounds. I have been at my goal weight of 150 pounds since mid December 2011. My husband can finally put his arms completely around me when he gives me hugs! My 87-year old mother looks at both my sister and me and is just so proud of what we accomplished. She keeps saying, "I don't remember you ever being this thin and looking this great!"

This is life changing. You learn how and what to eat. Exercising, of course, is a big part and it also makes you feel great! My husband loves to go bike riding. Now I am able to go with him and we enjoy nature together. We recently traveled to Florida. I have to say that sitting in an airplane seat, not feeling cramped and being able to cross my legs was a great feeling.

We went to Siesta Beach (the #1 beach in the United States), rented lounge chairs and took them down to the beach ourselves. I had no problem carrying those big chairs. I was kind of rushing to get there and my husband told me to take my time (he actually needed the rest)! It is the little things that I can do now that make me appreciate my new life!

I can never repay my sister for encouraging me to go to that information session and leading me to a better, healthier and happier life. I had so much support from my family, friends and co-workers. I have so much more confidence in myself. I really like myself and am enjoying my new life.

I cannot thank Dr. Claros, the Bariatric Team, and the St. Luke's Hospital-Allentown Campus staff enough. They are a very caring group. I feel I have such a bigger family now. The bariatric patients (a fantastic group of people) are one of a kind! The support group meetings and pep rallies are educational and informative. I recommend everyone who is contemplating bariatric surgery to attend as many meetings as you can.

Having bariatric surgery was a life-changing event for me and has been the best decision I have ever made. I AM LIVING A NORMAL, HAPPY AND HEALTHY LIFE.

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by bariatric surgery patient Beverly Rasich Harrison