



# TIPPING THE SCALES

Practical weight-loss tips from three people with diabetes | By Gina Roberts-Grey

**N**eed some motivation for reaching a healthy weight? Get inspired by three people with diabetes who shed a combined 132 pounds. And the best news of all: They did so without sacrificing their taste buds, starving themselves, or running marathons.

**27**

POUNDS  
LOST

**MOUSLY  
LE BLANC, MD**

**AGE:** 36

**OCCUPATION:** Medical doctor in psychiatry (physical medicine and rehabilitation) who works with cancer patients, and a certified relationship coach for women

**BEGAN LOSING WEIGHT:** September 2016

**CURRENT WEIGHT:** 138 pounds

Almost six years ago, with an A1C hovering around 5.8 percent, Mously Le Blanc was diagnosed with prediabetes. Carrying around extra weight from a 2014 pregnancy didn't help; by September 2016, Le Blanc's A1C had inched up to 6.2 percent. Hoping to once again hear the pitter-patter of precious baby feet, the Philadelphia-area physician was inspired to trim a few pounds from her 5-foot-1-inch frame. "My physician was concerned about me getting pregnant for a second time because pregnancy can negatively impact glucose control and my A1C was already too high," she says. "Both my OB-GYN and primary care physician felt my risk of developing



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

gestational diabetes during pregnancy was very high."

Le Blanc took action. She was prescribed 500 milligrams of metformin daily and set a goal of losing about 30 pounds before conceiving. She cut bread and chips from her diet and avoided processed foods and soda. Instead, she started cooking fresh foods regularly, filling up on brussels sprouts and using cauliflower to make mashed "potatoes" and pizza crust. She also began seeing a nutritionist, who helped her use a lower-carb eating plan to meet her weight goal, lose 5 percent of her body fat, and lower her A1C.

Le Blanc had been exercising three to five times a week, but to increase her fitness level, she began working with a trainer for two of those sessions. Three months

later, after dropping three dress sizes and lowering her A1C to 5.7 percent, she feels well prepared for a healthy pregnancy and recovery. "Along with no longer needing to take metformin and having a much healthier A1C, I have noticed tremendous improvements in the health of my skin, my attention, and energy levels," she says.



**22** ELLENA  
POUNDS LOST BOSS



CHECK WITH  
YOUR DOCTOR  
BEFORE MAKING  
CHANGES TO  
YOUR EATING  
OR EXERCISE  
PLAN.

**AGE:** 36

**OCCUPATION:** Preschool teacher

**BEGAN LOSING WEIGHT:** December 2016

**CURRENT WEIGHT:** 237 pounds

A December 2016 diagnosis of type 2 diabetes caused a dramatic change of mind-set for Ellena Boss. "I made a choice right then and there to live. I knew I had to improve my health for myself and my family," she says. "I wanted to watch my children grow up, get married. And I want to grow old with my husband."

So she set a goal of losing 20 pounds. With the help of her husband, whom she lovingly calls her "personal chef," Boss changed her diet. She started with beverages, swapping caffeinated and sugar-sweetened drinks for fruit-infused water and unsweetened tea.

"I totally cut out added sugar, saying no to all cookies, cake, and ice cream," says Boss, who lives in Louisiana with her family. Whey protein meal replacement drinks often take the place of one meal. Instead of fast or fried foods, dinner is now grilled chicken or fish. "I don't eat red meat of any kind. I now eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, and lots of salads." She uses the MyFitnessPal app to log the number of calories she eats throughout the day to stay on track and avoid mindless munching.

Boss also started moving more. She takes daily walks, even after a long day at work, and volunteers as a soccer coach. "That's something I wasn't able to do before my

## WEIGHT-LOSS STRATEGIES

### 1 DON'T SKIP MEALS.

"Eating a healthy breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with limited healthy snacks in between, has been shown to be the best way to optimize metabolism and stabilize blood glucose levels throughout the day," says Wendy Scinta, MD, founder of Medical Weight Loss of New York in Fayetteville, New York. "I suggest that my patients have their largest meal at lunch if possible."

### 2 AIM FOR QUALITY.

Not all calories are created equal. Stick with lean proteins such as chicken breast and fish, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and small servings of low-fat dairy. Added sugar should be minimized or avoided whenever possible, Scinta says.

### 3 DRINK UP.


Mild dehydration can often mimic hunger and trigger overeating. Aim to drink 64 to 82 ounces of water a day (if you have kidney disease or take a diuretic drug, check with your doctor first).

### 4 PILE ON PROTEIN.

To maintain muscle mass during weight loss, eat at least 1 gram of lean protein per 2.2 pounds of your body weight. "I encourage my patients to eat 30 grams of protein at least twice per day for optimal muscle preservation," says Scinta.

### 5 COUNT ALL CALORIES.

Don't overlook "invisible" calories, such as the butter or oil you use to prepare food.

A yellow measuring tape is coiled around the top and bottom of the page. The top part shows measurements from 11 to 14 inches. The bottom part shows measurements from 171 to 188 inches. The right side shows measurements from 82 to 87 inches.

weight loss, but now I have so much more energy and feel so much better.”

Along with lowering her A1C to 5.3 percent, Boss, who currently takes metformin twice a day, has reduced her blood pressure and cholesterol. “Since I met my first 20-pound goal, I’ve set another one,” she says. “I know with continued hard work and dedication, I can meet it.”

**EATING FEWER CARBS CAN CAUSE LOWS IF YOU TAKE INSULIN, MEGLITINIDES, AND/OR SULFONYLUREAS. YOU AND YOUR DOCTOR MAY NEED TO ADJUST YOUR MEDS.**

**83** **JOSEPH S. GILLERAN**  
POUNDS  
LOST

**AGE:** 45

**OCCUPATION:** Financial consultant

**BEGAN LOSING WEIGHT:** May 2014

**CURRENT WEIGHT:** 210 pounds

After a screening of his cardiovascular health, Joseph S. Gilleran says he was told he had a “pretty minimal chance of having a heart attack,” but he was stunned to learn he had type 2 diabetes. Months later, he had a heart attack.

“That heart attack forced me to pay attention to my scale,” says Gilleran. “I was almost 100 pounds overweight, weighing 293 in the hospital. My A1C was 13.3 [percent].”

After a five-day hospital stay, Gilleran was prescribed cardiac rehab—which consists of light exercise, stress relief, and education about a

heart-healthy lifestyle—along with metformin and insulin for blood glucose management and medicines to control his blood pressure and cholesterol. “The first day home, I was terrified for my life. My daughters were [age] 2, and I nearly left them fatherless,” he says.

Gilleran relied on his faith to help him chart a course to a healthier life. “I started ... thinking that my body is a temple, which helped me to make the dietary and lifestyle changes needed to be healthier,” he says. “So I exercise every day and eat healthy, never eating fried or fast foods or drinking pop. I pretty much only drink water.”

Four months after adopting his new lifestyle, Gilleran was able to stop taking all of his diabetes medications. “Now, my A1C is 5.6 and I feel great, and happy to be alive,” he says.

## DIABETES AND YOUR SCALE

How much you weigh is important, but where you store those pounds—particularly fat—can greatly influence your health.

“Body shapes are often referred to as apples and pears, based on where people store deposits of excess weight,” says Scott Cunneen, MD, FACS, FASMBS, director of

metabolic and bariatric surgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Pear-shaped people carry weight below their waist, while apple-shaped people are widest around the middle.

If you carry excess weight around the middle, a layer of fatty tissue, called visceral fat, covers and supports the intestines and organs in the lower abdominal area. “That type of excess weight is directly associated with type 2 diabetes because fat stored viscerally causes

more changes in your physiology that lead to inflammation and the pancreas and liver malfunctioning,” says Cunneen.

Your goal, when losing weight, is to decrease visceral fat. “Your body will lose weight in its own way,” Cunneen says. “But your goal is the reduction of gut fat versus butt fat.” There’s no proven method to specifically target visceral fat, but overall weight loss will eventually reduce it.