

WHOLE LIFE

Makeover, Part 2

Catch up with our two Becel makeover participants, Dawn Burns and Liz Pappas, who have hit Month 4 of their makeovers.

BY YLVA VAN BUUREN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NANCY FALCONI



Two women – Dawn Burns, a single, career-focused city dweller, and Liz Pappas, a married mom of two teens who lives in the 'burbs – discover that breaking a sweat at the gym and noshing nutritiously is hard work, but so worth it.



DAWN



LIZ

MAKE YOUR HEART HAPPY

Lifestyle habits play a huge role in reducing your risk of heart disease and stroke, which are the leading causes of death and disability in women today, says Dr. Beth Abramson, a cardiologist at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and spokesperson for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Common risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and a family history of heart disease. Being overweight and out of shape exacerbates these risk factors, says Abramson. Along with a heart-healthy diet, here are four habits that will help you take care of your heart.

1. Don't smoke.
2. Be active. You can join a gym, sign up for some exercise classes or make fitness a part of your daily life, for example, by walking regularly instead of driving everywhere.
3. Maintain a healthy weight. This will help control your blood pressure, cholesterol levels and the tendency to develop diabetes. It will also help reduce inflammation in blood vessels, which is associated with heart attack and stroke.
4. Deal with stress in heart-healthy ways. For example, instead of eating junk food, go for a brisk walk or cook up a healthy meal. Visit canadianliving.com/june for more heart health tips.

Overall, Dawn is thrilled with how she's feeling. "I have energy all day long. And I feel better about the way I look, and want to show it off – so I go out more."

DAWN BURNS

In just four months, Dawn has lost 13 pounds and gained a more positive attitude toward life. "I feel lighter and healthier, and I have more confidence than I've had in a really long time," says Dawn.

With a membership at Extreme Fitness and some help from her personal trainer, Justin Williams, Dawn has gone "from couch potato to fitness gal." She's committed to doing an hour-long fitness program three times a week at the gym, and to walking the 14 floors up to her apartment twice a week. "I haven't slipped up yet," Dawn says. She's also found ways to be more active in her everyday life. "I often take the stairs or walk up the escalator at the subway or the office – some days I practically run up!"

For the first few months, Dawn worked out with Williams once a week and by herself twice a week. "He taught me techniques and helped me feel like I belonged at the gym," she says. Now Dawn meets with Williams just once a month. "He keeps changing up my exercises, which means I am getting stronger and more fit," she says. "He always pushes me to that next level where I don't think I can do it – and then it turns out I can." When Dawn first started, for example, she used 10-pound dumbbells for certain exercises. Now she uses 20 pounds.

Like all of us, Dawn has days when she doesn't feel like working

out, "but I know I'll feel worse if I don't go to the gym," she says. "Plus, once you start seeing results, you get hooked on improving yourself. And my workouts always make me feel like I've accomplished something."

EATING RIGHT

Dawn's eating habits have improved, too. She now has three healthy meals a day and has cut coffee, deep-fried foods (such as french fries), alcohol and spicy foods from her diet. This is helping to manage her GERD (acid reflux). One of Dawn's tricks for staying on track is to make sure "I have healthy snacks at work (almonds and bananas, and cookies made with blueberries and flax) for when I have junk food cravings, which tend to peak when I'm stressed."

She adds that "keeping a food journal for [registered dietitian] Cara Rosenbloom gave me time to think about my food choices and if they're giving me what I need."

Rosenbloom says that because Dawn is lactose intolerant, she tends to avoid dairy products and her diet may be low in calcium. Good sources include lactose-free milk, canned salmon with bones, fortified soy milk, leafy greens, beans and tofu with calcium. If she still does not meet her calcium requirement, supplements may be helpful. Rosenbloom also recommends that Dawn speak to »

her doctor about taking lactase pills before eating dairy products.

While Dawn's overall cholesterol is good, her HDL (good) cholesterol level is a little low. "But regular exercise and continued weight loss, as well as eating more fatty fish such as salmon and trout, will help raise that," says Rosenbloom. High levels of HDL cholesterol are an important measure of our health because they can protect against heart disease and help remove bad cholesterol from our arteries.

Overall, Dawn is thrilled with how she's feeling. "I have energy all day long. And I feel better about

the way I look, and want to show it off – so I go out more."

NEW CHALLENGES

Dawn's biggest hurdle is that she doesn't cook. "I live on my own, so I prefer eating out with friends or picking up something quick on the way home." Rosenbloom suggests that Dawn take a cooking class. She has also given Dawn some easy and healthy recipes from *Canadian Living's Eat Right* cookbook, and has encouraged her to start making some meals for herself and when she has friends over.



STAY THE COURSE AT CELEBRATIONS

This season is full of festivities – weddings, showers, graduations. Here are some tips for sticking with healthy habits while having fun.

- Portion control is always important, especially when there are rich desserts at hand. Have a small spoonful or two so you don't miss out, but don't overindulge. Depriving yourself can actually increase your cravings and chances of bingeing.
- When filling your plate, opt for healthier, low-cal fare such as vegetables.
- Raise a toast with calorie-free sparkling water. Drinking alcohol, pop, punch and fancy coffees can pack on the pounds.
- Fit some activity into your day, even if it's just a quick 20-minute walk in the morning. At a special event, wander around rather than sit too long in one spot, and if there's dancing, be sure to hit the floor.

DAWN BURNS

	MONTH 1	MONTH 4
Height:	5'9"	
Current Body Weight:	190 lbs	177 lbs
Resting BP:	135/80	128/68
Resting HR:	78 bpm	75 bpm
Total Body Fat:	36%	26.6%
Body Mass Index:	28	26

MEASUREMENTS (inches)

Dress Size:	14	12
Arms:	12½ R 12½ L	12¾ R 12¾ L
Chest:	38	37½
Waist:	34	29½
Hips:	45½	44¾

Liz knows what motivates her, which is a big help. “I have a closet full of smaller-size clothes that I can’t wait to wear again.”

LIZ PAPPAS

Liz’s makeover got off to a slow start because minor surgery sidelined her for a few weeks. But this mom of two teens has now recommitted to exercise, says her trainer, Sarah Mulaner. It shows: Liz has lost nine pounds.

Liz sweats it out most weekday mornings in fitness classes. She loves spinning and a combination free weights/cardio class. Some days she may also do a 45- to 60-minute cardio workout on the elliptical machine. “It feels great to burn 500 calories,” says Liz, who loves the sense of accomplishment she has when she leaves the gym.

Every other Thursday, Liz works one-on-one with Mulaner, who provides strength-training workouts using free weights, an exercise ball and Liz’s own body weight. The lower-body exercises emphasize leg strengthening without overloading the knee, says Mulaner. (Liz tore cartilage in her knee a few years ago. That injury kept her from the gym for a few months and led to her regaining much of the weight she had previously lost.) Liz also modifies the exercises that she does in her classes to protect her knee.

MAKING SMART CHOICES

Liz, who admits to craving carbs, is much more careful about what – and how much – she eats these days. For instance, she passes on seconds and chooses whole wheat bread instead of white, and oatmeal or bran cereal instead of refined cereals, because they’re nutrient-rich and filling. “I also drink a lot of water to help me

feel full, and if I crave a sweet, I’ll just have a taste – a small piece of chocolate or half a cookie.”

While she kept a food journal for Rosenbloom for a few days, Liz didn’t find the process very helpful. “It was just one more thing in my already busy life.”

Liz’s main goal was to drop about 60 pounds and start exercising again, but she’s reaping other benefits from her healthier lifestyle: sleeping better and feeling less stressed. There’s more good news: her family physician, Dr. Valerie Kubazky, says both Liz’s blood pressure and blood sugar are good. Her LDL cholesterol, however, is still a bit high, but Kubazky says it should continue its downward trend with Liz’s ongoing exercise and weight loss. To boost Liz’s HDL cholesterol, Rosenbloom recommends she eat more fatty fish, such as salmon, trout, tuna and sardines. “Liz can also make sure she is including more monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil, in her diet because they help boost HDL, in addition to regular exercise and continued weight loss.”



LIZ PAPPAS

	MONTH 1	MONTH 4
Height:	5'7"	
Current Body Weight:	222 lbs	213 lbs
Resting BP:	102/60	108/60
Resting HR:	60 bpm	60 bpm
Total Body Fat:	36.5%	35.5%
Body Mass Index:	35	34

MEASUREMENTS (inches)

Dress Size:	16	16
(but Liz says her clothes feel looser)		
Arms:	15½ R	14½ R
	15¼ L	14¼ L
Chest:	46¾	44½
Waist:	40	37
Hips:	45½	44½

NEW CHALLENGES

As Liz starts putting in more hours at a new part-time office job, one of her biggest hurdles will be to go to the gym after work, instead of in the morning. “I’m not sure where I will find the energy,” she admits. Liz does know what motivates her, though, which is a big help. “I have a closet full of smaller-size clothes that I can’t wait to wear again.” ■

WHOLE-LIFE MAKEOVER: MONTH 6



When registered dietitian Cara Rosenbloom looked at Liz Pappas's and Dawn Burns's food journals, she noticed their diets were high in sodium. "Too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure, which is a risk factor for developing heart disease," says Rosenbloom. Dawn had been eating frozen entrées, chips and fast food, and the foods Liz had been enjoying – presweetened oatmeal, bread, sauces and dressings – have more salt than she realizes. Liz also admitted that she likes to add salt to her food and thought that was why she had too much sodium in her diet. It was a wake-up call for both women to learn that about 80 per cent of the sodium we get in our diets comes from packaged and processed foods, both of which Liz and Dawn tend to rely on heavily.

So Cara gave Liz and Dawn the 411 on low-sodium staples and frozen dinners (Dawn doesn't cook that much and lives alone) for their next trips to the grocery store.

Here are some shopping tips to help you lower the amount of sodium in your diet.

- Choose fresh, whole, unprocessed foods more often (fresh veggies and fruit instead of canned varieties; natural cheese instead of processed cheese slices).
- Compare the sodium content of packaged foods and choose the ones with less sodium. Aim for less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. (The average Canadian takes in 3,100 mg per day.)
- Read labels and look for food products that are "salt-free" (less than 5 mg per serving), "low in sodium" (140 mg or less per serving) or "sodium reduced" (25 per cent less sodium than the original product).

— Ylva Van Buuren