

His worsening diabetes forced Brian to change the way he eats and drinks.



ly. If I went to eat out at family or friends I'd take my own food with me or simply eat before going out and not eat there.

I was quite unfit and suffered from chronic lower-back pain so I started sessions with a biokineticist (a movement and exercise specialist). We took things slowly as I was unfit but I gradually grew stronger.

What healthy habits have you maintained since those initial changes?

I still don't (and won't) drink alcohol or eat sugar or carbohydrates, except for oats porridge which I have for breakfast. I still see the biokineticist but just once a week rather than four times a week. I exercise for about 40 minutes daily – cardio (jogging, on my bike or on a treadmill at an incline) as core-strengthening exercises.

I try to keep to only one plate of food (which I don't always succeed at) and try to fill up on broccoli (which I happen to love) and salad. I'm not as concerned about adding olive oil or, as a treat, adding a teaspoon of butter to my porridge but I feel that I can eat at a restaurant again and I tend to order steak with a salad or non-starchy vegetables or grilled fish.

I use an app on my phone called MyFitnessPal which helps me track my kilojoule in-

take and keep an exercise diary.

And I know this sounds crazy but I think of sugar as rat poison. I've always enjoyed cooking and baking and I continue to do so. I bake chocolate brownies and cupcakes for Lemon & Lime Deli in Pringle Bay which I don't even taste now. I won't even lick icing sugar off my hands. I regards sugar and carbs as a drug that will kill me if I have them again.

What motivates you to maintain this new lifestyle?

I know I've dodged a bullet by dealing with my obesity in the way that I have. I'm not against having weight-loss surgery and if ever I can't keep my weight off myself I will have it, but now that I've maintained my healthy weight for myself, I've grown confident that I can, and will, keep it off.

What are some of the challenges you faced?

The biggest challenge was my mother's failing health and

death in June last year. I told myself that if I can stick to my healthy eating plan in these circumstances, I can do so in any circumstances

How has the weight loss affected the rest of your health?

I no longer use any medication for diabetes or high-blood pressure. Also, I'm no longer in pain and can move around with ease and pleasure.

I think I'm less easy to get on with now. I think as a fatty I overcompensated and tried to be nicer than I really am. I don't try as hard now which means some people experience me as being harsher and less funny than before.

But, more importantly, I feel as if I've been given a second chance at living and I am so excited at discovering new things I can do.

Once I couldn't even reach the top of the mountain behind our house and now I can run up it! I feel like an entirely new person.

What kind of support did you receive from those close to you?

My family wasn't supportive of the idea of me having weight-loss surgery and tried to talk me out of it.

At the time I didn't think there was any other way for me to lose weight, as I'd tried and failed so many times before.

Then there were on-going challenges with family and friends, like me bringing my own food with me when I visited or eating before and not eating at friends' houses at all.

Also, my decision to prepare my own food rather than let my spouse JP do so meant a significant change in our domestic routine.

My relationship with JP is very different because he is someone who likes to hike and be active but previously I couldn't participate in that with him. It makes me very happy now to be able to walk up the mountain or go cycling with him.

I sleep more soundly now so in some respects I'm more pleasant to be around. Not being in constant discomfort is very liberating!

It's nice to have the support of family and friends but at the end of the day the person who is fat is the person who has to get healthy. ■

BRIAN'S TOP TIPS

- **Ask for help** Consulting a therapist with whom I could talk about my feelings was very useful in helping me clarify how to develop coping strategies. I had to accept I was making myself sick before I could make myself better.
- **Routine and planning ahead are my friends** It means that I never get too hungry or don't have the time to shop or exercise.
- **Find a new path to pleasure** Replace your passion for eating with a passion for being healthy and active.

HOW HIS DAILY DIET CHANGED

THEN

Breakfast Cooked oats porridge with butter or full English breakfast along with croissants and Danish pastries, jams etc.

Lunch If eating at a restaurant, I'd probably have three glasses of wine during the course of the meal and bread with butter if it was served to the table. I'd usually eat whatever the restaurant was best known for but always a starter, main and dessert.

Dinner The same would apply to dinner if eating out but probably with a cocktail first. If eating at home, we'd probably have pasta with mince or lamb stew.

Snacks I loved bread and would typically snack on bread with jam and peanut butter.

Drinks Three glasses of wine during lunch.

NOW

Breakfast Two boiled eggs.

Lunch Large green salad with a home-made vinaigrette dressing and chicken breast or canned tuna.

Dinner Steamed broccoli with either chicken or pan-fried tuna or salmon. I also enjoy steak cooked on the braai once a week.

Snacks Granny Smith apples. Fuji apples when I want something sweet.

Drinks Water and black coffee.