

MISSION MAKEOVER

Month 2 | By Rachel Clayton. Photo by Barb Levant.



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WEIGHING IN

Virginia Wilkinson

Assistant Manager at The Bernadin

Age: 37

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 227 lbs.

Now: 215 lbs.

Body fat: 39.3 percent

Now: 34.3 percent

Fitness level: Initial, VO2 max of 32.0 (poor)

Now: 44.6 (superior)

Total Loss: 12 lbs., 13 inches

LAST MONTH

we introduced Virginia Wilkinson, a bubbly 37-year-old professional looking to make a permanent lifestyle change. We set her up with Dr. Lauren Weiss, a nutritionist; Sharon Mehalek, a physical trainer; and Suzanne Newman, an image consultant, to help her achieve her goals. After one major closet makeover, a heart scan, and a gym membership later, all of our coaches agree that Virginia's well on her way to success.

HER UNEXPECTED REACTION

Virginia says she was unprepared for how bad she felt after seeing last month's article in print. "I've always had a sense of embarrassment about my weight, but never the intense shame I felt that day. It made me realize just how much I had let my weight get away from me. I felt like I had let my family, my friends, and most importantly, myself, down." Still, our Louisiana-born gal has a positive outlook. "I realize I need to forgive myself for the past and remain focused on the progress I've made in order to reach my goal of getting healthy and regaining control of my weight," she says.

AN IMPORTANT TEST

In working to regain control of her health, and because of her history of heart disease, Virginia decided to visit The Heart Scan of Chicago and take a new test called a 64-slice CT scan (the same test Matt Lauer had on The Today Show). "I wanted to take this test to put my mind at ease about heart disease. I was very nervous going into the test, but because my blood pressure and cholesterol were fine, I honestly thought all would be well. There were no red flags," she says.

EYE-OPENING RESULTS

Doctors found that Virginia did have some blockage in her arteries but because there was so much information to review, it took about five days to get the complete results: There was, in fact, significant blockage. The doctor advised Virginia to take a stress test with a cardiologist immediately. "I was officially freaked," Virginia says. "It took me about a week to get in to see another doctor and then another five days of waiting to get those results. The good news is that I learned that I did excellent on my stress test. But, the blockage is there." For now, doctors have instructed Virginia to take one Aspirin a day along with a fish oil supplement. "Hopefully that will be enough," Virginia says. "This whole thing literally consumed me for two weeks. At least now I feel more comfortable about the diagnosis and I'm happy to know it's both manageable and probably reversible."



Virginia listens as a doctor at The Heart Scan of Chicago explains the test.

LESSONS LEARNED After Suzanne's visit and her major closet makeover, Virginia says she's much better at recognizing how things fit. "Things I thought were too small looked much better on me and things I thought were fine, were actually too big or just not flattering to my body type," she says. She's especially excited for next month's shopping trip. "I know that with Suzanne's help I'll end up feeling much more comfortable in my clothes and much more stylish! Though, I really think I may need to take out a loan for all the items I need!" she jokes. Virginia is full of praise for her other coaches as well. "Sharon and Lauren are my constant cheerleaders! I've learned so much from them. Sharon really keeps me motivated. After I leave a session with her I'm excited and actually want to continue exercising," she says. "And Lauren has been so supportive with everything—especially with this heart issue—helping me have the best diet and take the right supplements. I'm so lucky to be working with all of my wonderful ladies."

VIRGINIA'S GOALS FOR NEXT MONTH:

•Increase the length of time and frequency of exercise. "My goal is to try and do a little something every day—even if it's just for 20 minutes," she says.

•Kick up my water intake. "I don't miss all of my sugar-free drinks like I did in the beginning," Virginia says. "I can't even eat or drink Splenda anymore. It's just way too sweet for me now. But boy-oh-boy do I still miss my Diet Coke!"

•Stay off the scale. "I get so wrapped up in that scale. I can be feeling great and then get on the scale and it deflates me," Virginia admits. "I need to learn to judge my success by how my clothes fit and how I feel instead."

•Plan meals in advance. “I plan to make the week’s menu on Sunday and make sure I have all the grocery items I need for the week,” Virginia says. “That way, there’s less chance of me cheating!”

*To find out more about the benefits of having a heart scan, visit www.heartscanofchicago.com

COACH NOTES

SUZANNE NEWMAN, Image Consultant with Find Fashion Happiness

Goal This Month: Clean out Virginia’s closet!

After their initial consultation, Suzanne visited Virginia’s apartment where the two spent nearly four hours decluttering, reorganizing and overhauling Virginia’s wardrobe. “As she tried on each article of clothing, we discussed how to evaluate clothing fit and what to look for in the shoulders, pants length, hips, etc.,” Suzanne says. If an item was ripped, stained, poor-fitting or unflattering, Suzanne immediately sorted it into one of three piles: Donation, Cleaning or Alteration. After, Suzanne organized Virginia’s best existing wearable options by color and clothing type. “Virginia was thrilled to see a closet full of different and flattering clothing choices she now had with pieces she hadn’t felt comfortable in before.”

Next, Suzanne helped Virginia make a list of items she would need to help her achieve her image goals. “For starters, her black pants selection was too short, too big or too outdated,” Suzanne says. “I tried to give Virginia guidelines and knowledge that will help her shop better and make more flattering choices.” Virginia’s biggest fashion challenge is picking out clothes for a night on the town, so, before she left, Suzanne helped Virginia select an outfit for her Saturday outing. “She immediately looked pulled together and definitely sexier!” Suzanne says. (Visit www.tcwmag.com for Suzanne’s tips).

DR. LAUREN WEISS, Certified Clinical Nutritionist

Goal This Month: Make Virginia’s diet heart-healthier.

“Virginia’s diet has been great so far. She’s stayed on the right track, eating whole, healthy foods,” Dr. Weiss says proudly. Being overweight and sedentary are two major risk factors for heart disease, and Dr. Weiss says Virginia is addressing both those issues. “Her endurance has increased, her diet has changed, her activity has gone up and her weight has decreased,” Dr. Weiss says. But, because the heart scan showed that Virginia had significant blockages in her arteries, Dr. Weiss says it was necessary to make some changes to her diet. “We needed to tweak her program and tailor it towards prevention and treatment of cardiovascular health,” she says. “There are still some wonderful natural supplements that are important for her to add.”

Because Virginia was already taking a multivitamin with antioxidants and a B-complex, Dr. Weiss suggested adding CoQ10 and fish oils. “CoQ10 is a great anti-oxidant for cardiovascular health. In fact, it was originally patented to be used as a drug for heart disease,” Dr. Weiss explains. Taking a 1,000 mg fish oil pill was important because Dr. Weiss believes “heart-healthy nutrition” starts with omega-3’s. “We’re all afraid of fat. And yes, saturated and trans-fats are dangerous. But, omega-3’s are a class of fats that are not only beneficial, but essential to heart and overall health.”

SHARON MEHALEK, Personal Trainer and General Manager of LifeStart at Riverpark Athletic Club

Goal This Month: Increase the intensity and variety of Virginia’s workouts.

In the past month, Sharon has focused on getting Virginia to ramp up her cardio workouts. “The heart muscle is just like any other muscle—it becomes accustomed to what we’re doing and it needs to be challenged to work harder,” Sharon says. “I suggested Virginia turn her steady state endurance workouts on the treadmill or elliptical into interval workouts.” Interval workouts involve increasing speed or incline for specific periods of time, then dropping back down to a steady state throughout the workout session. “This method of a cardiovascular workout pushes the body to a new level, helping Virginia to not only burn more calories, but to achieve a higher VO2 max,” Sharon says. Another big change: Virginia recently joined a health club close to her home. “This way she can take advantage of the many different group exercise classes and try out a variety of cardiovascular machines,” Sharon says.

In addition, during their biweekly strength training sessions, Sharon increased the number of reps and added new exercises to Virginia’s routine. “We’ve been doing two sets of each exercise, super-setting some routines or doing circuit training to keep her heart rate up and burn more calories,” Sharon says. She also incorporated more balance and core training into each session. “This prevents injury, encourages muscle symmetry and strengthens her deeper abdominal and lower back musculature.”

Sharon echoes the sentiments of all Virginia’s coaches when she says, “Virginia is making fabulous, healthy progress. She’s truly undergoing a permanent lifestyle change. In the process she’s creating a more confident, stronger, balanced, even more beautiful woman than she already is.”

*For more information and facts on heart disease, the number one killer of women, visit www.americanheart.org ■

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