



# Diabetes Success Story: Ric Lost 73 Pounds and Dramatically Lowered His A1C

By [Everyday Health Guest Contributor](#)



**Name:** Ric Loya

**Age:** 70

**Starting A1C:** 7.9

**Current A1C:** 5.6



**Starting Weight:** 288 pounds

**Current Weight:** 215 pounds

**Total Weight Loss:** 73 pounds and counting!

**What was the turning point that led you to seek a healthier lifestyle?**

About a year ago, I started having what turned out to be [type 2 diabetes symptoms](#), and I knew it was time to go to see the doctor. I was at 288 pounds, and I knew that the doctor would yell at me for that, so I lost 10 pounds before I even called to make an appointment. When the results of my bloodwork came back, my doctor told me, “Well, you don’t have pre-diabetes — you skipped that and have full-blown diabetes.”

My [A1C](#) was 7.9. That was a big shock to me, and I knew it was time to make a change.

**How did you get started?**

I’d tried dieting in the past, and it just didn’t work. I knew I needed to try something new and that’s when I found the [YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program](#) . To be honest, it was a little intimidating knowing that I’d have to be weighed in front of a group, and I was nervous about who would be at the meeting. I figured that the staff was skinny and there was no way they’d understand what I was going through, but at the first meeting I attended, I realized I was no longer alone; the people in the group were going through the same thing that I was. That was really important for me.

**What is your go-to food when you are crunched for time?**

I have a few snacks to get me through when I’m really busy. I usually reach for wheat



Chex cereal with skim milk, a part-skim cheese stick, a [healthy smoothie](#), or a fat-free yogurt.

### **What is your favorite rehabbed version of an old (and unhealthy) favorite food?**

I don't really have one. I have new recipes! I didn't think I'd ever like this way of eating, but I love it! For example, for [Thanksgiving](#) we made a roasted Moroccan turkey breast with root vegetables — it was delicious. It took a while to get over the feeling of "I can't give that up," but once I did, the results were amazing!

If I really want to have an old favorite, I rearrange my day a bit. I have a smaller portion of that particular food, and I make sure that I exercise and stay on track for the rest of the day.

### **When you're feeling frustrated or like you've gotten off track, what trick helps you get back in the groove?**

In the past, I dealt with my frustrations by eating. Now, I go for a walk or hop on a bike. Eating is no longer what I do to deal with my emotions.

### **What is your daily meal plan like?**

**Breakfast:** Yogurt, whole grain toast, and coffee

**Mid-morning snack:** Cheese stick, smoothie, or fruit

**Lunch:** I'll have a lean burger (instead of 3) or a tuna sandwich on thin bread – portion control is key!

**Afternoon snack:** 100 calorie bag of popcorn. I used to eat buttered popcorn by the gallon, so this is a much healthier option for me.

**Dinner:** We focus on chicken and turkey and only have steak on occasion. When we



have pork, it's the loin instead of the fattier chops. We eat on small plates to keep portions in check.

**Dessert:** We don't have this anymore. I used to eat ice cream every night. If I really want ice cream now, I buy one of the small single serving size containers. Then, when it's gone, it's gone.

**Evening snack:** Popcorn or fruit. I fill up on things that don't have the fat, calories, or added sugar of the items I used to choose like pie or cake.

### **What has been your biggest challenge? How did you overcome it?**

[Special occasions](#) have been tricky. If the food is there, it's hard not to have a bite because once I taste it, I want more. When I went on a cruise, I ate in moderation, took my time when eating, and really tasted my food. I kept exercising in the gym on the ship and walked everywhere. I gained a few pounds, but I took it right off as soon as I was home and went back to my regular way of eating.

### **What keeps you motivated each day?**

My knees used to hurt all of the time — walking down stairs, when I traveled, etc. I don't have to deal with that pain anymore. The support of the other members of the weight loss group at the YMCA has been helpful because we reinforce one another. The compliments from strangers are nice, too. It's motivating to know that other people are noticing my healthier figure.

### **What has been the biggest reward for the changes you've made?**

[My A1C is a big one.](#) I got it down from 7.9 to 5.6 which is a huge improvement! Also, in



the past, when I flew on airplanes, I had to request a seat belt extender. The last time I flew, I asked the flight attendant for one and she said, “Oh, you won’t need one of those.” I said, “I know, I want to take a picture with it to remember this moment.”

**Do you have any advice for someone who has just been diagnosed with diabetes?**

It isn’t the end of the world. You can deal with it and you don’t have to give up everything you think you have to. You can make changes to control your blood sugar, lose weight, or even get your numbers to go back to a normal state. It really is manageable, especially if you have people who support you. That makes it so much easier.

Photos: Ric Loya

Reporting by [Kelly Kennedy, RD, Everyday Health Staff](#)