

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## Weighing in on weight loss

Shape success story relates her weight loss secrets and healthy eating habits

By Kathy Von Mullekom  
KRT CAMPUS

NEWPORT NEWS, Va.-- Tracey Dickson calls Saturday her "free food day."

It's the day she indulges in Chunky Monkey, a Ben and Jerry's ice cream made with bananas, fudge chunks and walnuts, or treats herself to pizza.

"I allow one day a week to eat whatever I want," said Dickson, 36.

The other six days are different. She meticulously monitors her meals, sticking to skinless chicken breast, ground turkey burgers and baked fish.

The Hampton, Va., resident didn't always eat this way. In college, she pigged out on burgers,

fries and pizza. Eventually, her weight ballooned to 150 pounds, too much for her 5-foot-3-inch frame, she said.

"I was living on garbage," she said of her two years at the Art Institute of Atlanta.

She hated her pudgy look and finally decided enough was enough. She lost 35 pounds in less than a year and has avoided putting the pounds back on.

Dickson's ability to maintain her 115-pound figure for almost seven years is the main reason Shape magazine features her success story on page 138 of its September issue.

Healthy eating and regular exercise keep her trim and toned, she said. She enjoys slipping into a size 4 dress instead of tugging on a 14.

In addition to lean meat, she eats veggies, fruits

and protein shakes. Any rice, bread and pasta she consumes is always the brown and whole-wheat type. She sticks to diet sodas, and she drinks eight to 11 glasses of water daily.

"I love Kashi," she said. "Any brand of Kashi cereal is good for you."

Kashi is a line of foods processed with few sugars, additives and preservatives.

Before college, Dickson never worried about her weight. Cheerleading kept her active and thin. Her mother, Laester Dickson Willis, cooked balanced, nutritious meals, she said.

College is where fast-food meals and late-night studying became her way of life. The pounds started adding up.

After gaining 15 pounds at the art institute, she tried every diet out there. Nothing, not even the protein-based Atkins or cabbage-only diet, worked. She lost some weight, but soon gained it back plus more pounds.

She even resorted to gimmicks such as the vinyl pants she wore under her regular clothes to "sweat off" the pounds.

When she decided weight loss was her primary goal, she didn't go cold turkey. Instead, she phased in little successes. She concentrated on smaller portions and better food choices.

"I would have fries and a burger but I wouldn't eat the bun," she said. "I kept setting these little goals until I finally got a pretty clean diet."

Each day, she fixes six mini-meals in small plastic bags. When she's traveling as a flight attendant with Southwest Airlines, the meals are packed in an insulated bag that goes with her.

Breakfast may be an egg-white omelet she pre-cooks and slips into a bag. When she's ready to eat the omelet, she slides it into a piece of wheat flat bread and warms both in a microwave.

A protein shake and piece of fruit can be another meal.

"These small meals keep me energized," she said.

During a three-day trip with the airlines, she may eat out two evening meals.

"It's not realistic to eat perfect every day," she said. "But I've learned to make smart choices. If I get off my eating habits, I just get back on."

Exercise also plays a major role in her slimmed-down look. Again, she allowed time and determina-

tion to help her get the results she wanted.

At first, it was all she could do to walk a quarter mile. She walked that distance for a few weeks, then upped the goal to half a mile. It took her three months before she could walk the 3-mile trail adjacent to Sentara Hampton Health and Fitness Center.

Once she could comfortably walk three miles, she started doing a slow jog.

"I needed to get my heart rate up and just walking wasn't doing it anymore," she said. "So I kept upping the goal."

Now, each week she runs 20 miles and works out with hand weights and equipment such as the elliptical trainer at the fitness center. She also takes hour-long Body Pump cardio classes twice a week. She logs all her workouts in a daily planner so she can make sure she stays on target.

"Exercise is an absolute part of my day," she said. "It has to be if I want to live in the body I want."

### TRACEY'S TIPS

Here are some tips for losing and maintaining weight and toning muscles:

Phase more lean meats, veggies and fruits into your eating habits.

Permit yourself foods you like, but keep fatty ones to a minimum.

If you fall off your diet or exercise schedule, don't beat yourself up. Just get back on track.

When you eat at a restaurant, leave some of the meal on your plate.

Watch your white flour and sugar intake.

Make exercise a part of your daily life.

Combine weight training with cardiovascular workouts to get strong muscles.

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Tracey Dickson works out at a fitness center in Hampton, Va., on Sept. 3. SANG JIB • KRT CAMPUS

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