

Standing tall

Under the threat of wheelchair dependency, Tara McGinty was inspired to lose 100-plus pounds.

There's nothing worse than feeling "different" from the rest of your family, yet that's a struggle Tara McGinty has faced since she was 8 years old. "No one else in my family struggled with weight, but I remember getting teased and being called names like 'blueberry' and 'fat girl,'" she says. McGinty hated eating in front of her family because she didn't want to be judged, so she would starve herself and then binge-eat as soon as she got home.

By the time McGinty graduated high school, she weighed 260 pounds and had already begun the never-ending cycle of losing weight on fad diets, then regaining that weight in short shrift. McGinty struggled with depression and started having anxiety attacks, and she used food as a comforting mechanism.

A Devastating Diagnosis

Shortly after giving birth to her second child, McGinty began experiencing health problems.

Her symptoms started with debilitating exhaustion and became a pain in her hands and wrists that was so bad, she couldn't grip a cup of coffee. Next, the pain manifested in her hips and back, and she was barely able to walk up a flight of stairs. After years of misdiagnoses, which compounded her depression and caused her to contemplate suicide, she was finally given an answer: rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic and progressive disease that causes inflammation in the joints.

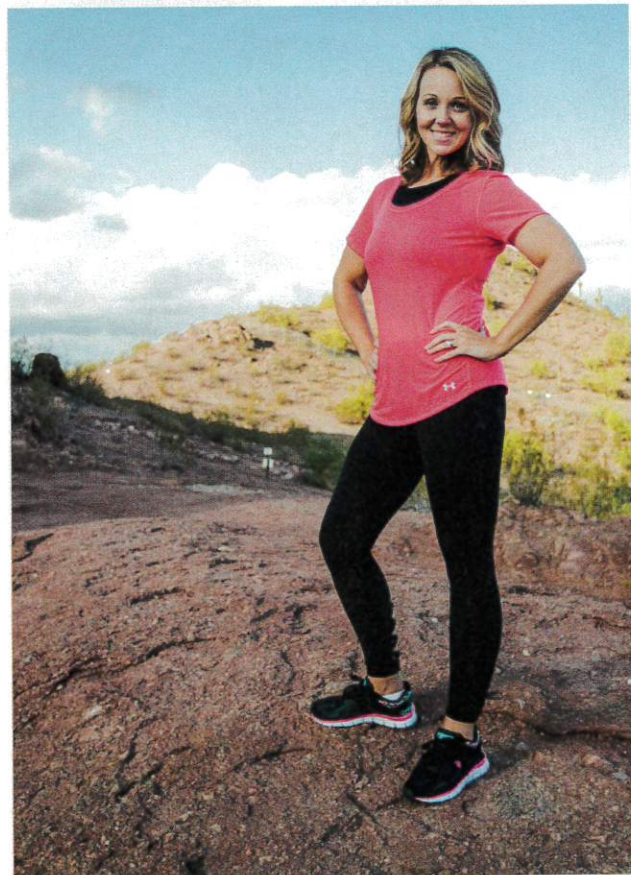
"During my first visit with my rheumatologist, I was told most patients who develop this disease before age 30 end up in a wheelchair by age 40; I was 29 at the time," she says. "I decided that was not going to be me."

Because her extra weight was putting a lot of pressure on her joints, McGinty knew that she had to change her habits and that proper nutrition was key. She began eating healthy foods and started to lose weight. "Then I started to have the energy to be active," she says. "I started with walking and doing light cardio on the elliptical machine, as well as enjoying some light hiking outdoors."

Not Letting RA Win

It took two-and-a-half years for McGinty to lose 118 pounds (and her husband, Ray, also lost 50). She now uses intermittent fasting as part of her protocol and avoids foods that cause inflammation and RA flare-ups such as sugar, alcohol, dairy and gluten. McGinty works out four times a week, doing low-impact cardio and lifting weights, and she is now studying to become a certified personal trainer with a focus on severely overweight clients.

"Before, even hugs from my sons hurt, it was like knives in my body," she recalls. "Now being able to hug, squeeze and cuddle with them without pain is priceless. I also get to play and run and be an active mom. I don't even have to think about it. I just do it."



Before and after photos of Tara

stats

Tara McGinty/
Kennewick,
Washington

age: 33

height: 5'6"

old weight: 260 lb

current weight: 138 lb

occupation: Stay-at-home mom, soon-to-be personal trainer

Tara's Favorite ...

► **Recipe:** Spicy jalapeño cauliflower pizza crust topped with homemade tomato sauce, red onions, shredded chicken, cilantro, jalapeños, fresh garlic and lime juice.

► **Advice:** Chase health instead of a number on a scale.

► **Mantra:** You don't have to be the best, you just have to try your best. Expecting perfection only sets you up for disappointment. Once you learn to allow yourself grace, it is easier to pick yourself up and continue your journey.