

# From couch potato to fitness enthusiast:

## How one man learned to love living well

Walking, cycling, hiking—as far as Brian McGrath was concerned, any kind of physical activity was a big waste of time. “I figured that exercising was crazy, that I got enough of that at my job all day.”

Trouble was, said the 49-year-old, his health reflected that attitude: two years ago he weighed 255 pounds. A supervisor at Invista Canada in Kingston, he had excruciating back pain, high cholesterol, troublesome heartburn, and insomnia.

Desperate to alleviate his back pain, Brian took the advice of his massage therapist and started walking around his downtown Kingston neighbourhood. Short distances at first, then he took on longer daily walks. He found that he loved the feeling he got when he was physically active. He was more focused and had more energy. Buoyed by the fact he was looking and feeling better, Brian decided to take inventory of his diet, too.

At the time, he was consuming a full litre of Coke every day. He eliminated that habit and also cut out added sugar, white bread and fatty foods. “I started eating breakfast, added more fibre to my meals, cut back on the bad fats, and I reduced portion sizes,” he said.

So how has this shift in attitude affected Brian McGrath’s health two years later?

He’s dropped more than 50 pounds. His cholesterol levels are back to normal, and he no longer takes heartburn medication. His sleeping has improved, and his back pain has all but vanished.

Brian’s story is proof that introducing healthy lifestyle changes can have a big impact on quality of life. This is the message behind a new KFL&A Public Health initiative called Motiv8. This program is about eating well, getting fit, and living life. The Motiv8 vision is that all adults in KFL&A will have the

supportive environments they need to increase awareness, promote motivation, and build skills to improve their health by eating well and being active. These adults can then pass these healthy habits on to the children in their lives.

As for Brian, he still walks up to 15 kilometres a day, several days a week, but this physical activity enthusiast has added hiking and cycling to his routine. He recently started weekly circuit training “to step things up a bit” and he’s looking forward to canoeing this summer.

Last year, he walked a half-marathon (“I beat a lot of the runners!”), hopes to participate in another one this fall and he’s planning to walk a full marathon next year to celebrate his 50th birthday.

These days, very few things come between this man and his daily physical activity.

“I walked during that nasty winter we just had, even in some of those blizzards. One day, I hiked for five and-a-half hours in minus 18 degree weather—I just loved it.”

This convert is ready to impart his newfound wisdom to the next generation: “I have an eight-month-old grandson—pretty soon I’m gonna get him a pair of running shoes so he can get started early.”



An initiative by KFL&A Public Health

Check out all eight factors at [www.eatwellgetfitlivelife.ca](http://www.eatwellgetfitlivelife.ca)