

Healthy lifestyle brings flower power

Ted Fox and his wife, Wendy, plant flowers every spring. Not just a row or two but 600 of them throughout their 2-acre Sydenham property. Until this year, Ted's back and neck would ache for days after a marathon gardening session.

"It used to just about kill me," said Ted, 53. "This year, I didn't even have to think about pain while I was planting. Halfway through it occurred to me that I was pain-free."

Why was this year so different? Six months ago, Ted decided to tweak his lifestyle by altering a few habits.

While he always loved vegetables, he started eating more. He also added fruit to his diet. And while he used to go overboard with serving sizes, he's scaled back to more reasonable portions.

Ted used to enjoy fatty breakfast foods like sausages and home fries but now he eats fruit for breakfast more often than not. Ted also switched from creamy salad dressings to the lighter, spray-on version. And to drink? It's nothing but water.

"We're very conscious of what we eat now," said Ted, "except on Fridays, which is cheat night." Even then, Ted and Wendy tend to stick to healthier fare, such as lean steak or shrimp.

"It helps that my wife is such a great cook – she's actually like my personal chef and dietitian. She even prepares a menu of meals for the whole week so it's easier to stay on track. Tonight, we're having swordfish with Greek salad salsa."

Ted's never been one to lie on the couch. But he has also stepped up his physical activity, making sure that he takes a walk at least three times a week.

Besides having more energy for gardening, Ted has seen another big change. Six months ago, he weighed 301 pounds, well over his healthy weight range. Like anyone who overeats and under-exercises, Ted was at greater risk for a host of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes, and osteoporosis.



Ted'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.

"We're both feeling great," said Ted, "and it really hasn't been that difficult. We just decided to make a few lifestyle changes and good things started happening."



An initiative by KFL&A Public Health

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