

Big Change: VETERAN JOHN CHICCINO GAINS A NEW LEASE ON LIFE WITH MOVE![®]

For years, Veteran John Chiccino's nurse and doctor told him about the risks of leading an unhealthy life. "They suggested I lose weight, but those comments went in one ear and out the other," John recalls. "But the turning point came when my blood sugar levels were rising and I was close to needing diabetes medication." John didn't want to take insulin shots—something his mother had to do—because he hates needles.

Forward March

In October 2012, John agreed to meet with Registered Dietitian Regina Latourrette at the Albany (NY) Stratton VAMC. He weighed 297 pounds, but was determined to start losing weight and getting healthier through MOVE![®]. Because John had successfully lost weight before, he knew he could do it again.

He began his weight management efforts with a 10-minute walking program, which was challenging. "As the temperature dropped, I became more depressed," John says. "But I realized that there were Veterans running marathons with amputated limbs." To continue walking, he just went indoors. After getting a manager's permission, he started walking around the local grocery store. "I got to know the employees and the walking became easier," John recalls. "It was comforting to be in a familiar place and have people expecting me." And that comfort helped him stay committed to his exercise routine.



New Eats

As John's health started changing for the better, he began looking forward to his monthly MOVE![®] appointment. Both Regina and John's girlfriend, Michelle, also encouraged him to start eating better. "Michelle adjusted our meals to include double servings of vegetables. I added fruits into my diet, which was hard because I didn't like them much," John explains. "Over time, though, I've developed a love for fruits and

vegetables, and I can't imagine having meals without them!" He gradually reduced his portions, made an effort to eat more slowly, and started eating out only once per week.

Radical

John has surprised everyone—including himself—with his “radical” health change. “It’s amazing the way you feel,” he reports. “Before I started my weight loss journey, they said I’d have more energy if I made changes, and I always thought, ‘yeah, right.’ But I’ve felt an increase in energy and seen other positive changes, too.” John’s been able to stop his cholesterol medications, reduce his blood pressure medications, and avoid diabetes medications altogether. And his blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar are all normal!

“The benefits are so rewarding,” John explains. “Just being able to walk and participate in activities has given me a new lease on life!”



[This article is an edited version of a story created by Stratton VAMC MOVE!® staff.]