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Before the Thrive Challenge, I was spending a lot of time at the doctor, dealing with high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. I was just going to work every day and then coming home, without exercising or focusing on my eating habits. I remember going to an appointment one time to check on my blood pressure, and the doctor told me I'd have to be hospitalized if I didn't make any changes to my diet. That scared me. It was the moment when I knew I had to do something.

I spoke to my coworker, Liliana Santiago, who had done the Thrive Challenge.

I told her about my blood pressure and she told me to try it out. She thought it could help me improve my habits. I knew I had to start with food because of my cholesterol problems, so my first step was cutting out my sodas, and instead drinking water. I decided that would be the small step that would help lead to more.

Once I had cut out the sodas and juices, I wanted to learn to prepare healthy foods for myself.

I was used to eating junk food all the time, but once I was drinking water, I knew I had to introduce new foods too. At the beginning, my inner voice would tell me, "I can't eat that food because that's not what I always eat." But slowly, I started to change my mindset. I've always loved rice and beans, and slowly I had to tell myself to incorporate salads too. I needed to make a change for my cholesterol, and my son was helping me do that. He's been my biggest supporter. He helped me prepare my meals and learn to cook. I started eating more vegetables, chicken, tuna, and salmon — and eating at home even helped us save money.

In the past, my son was always the one telling me, "Mom, you can't eat like this."

He's an athlete and he's really healthy, so he's always wanted this for me. And now, we're spending more time together, planning out recipes we're going to make, meals we're going to eat during the week, and just taking time to be together. My goal is to save up so that I can help pay for his university tuition. He is in college now and I want to be able to help him.



I started waking up early to go for a walk before work.

My son was encouraging me to do it. He's always said to me, "Mom, let's go for a walk." And even though I was nervous to start, after reading other peoples' stories on Thrive, I just said to myself, "If they could do it, why can't I?" So I started getting up at 6:00 a.m. It was difficult at first, but now that I've been doing it every morning, I don't even have to set an alarm anymore! It's automatic for me. And my coworkers have been supportive, too. There are eight of us at the pharmacy doing the Thrive Challenge, so we talk about it together, and they'll say things like, "We can't fall, we have to keep going."

Looking back, I would've ended up in the hospital if I didn't take that first step.

I have a history of blood pressure in my family. My mother died about ten years ago of a stroke due to high blood pressure, and my sister has high blood pressure too. There was a time I really thought I wasn't going to be able to change my habits. But I recently went back to the doctor and was told my blood pressure is getting better, and my cholesterol is better. I was even taken off my cholesterol medication completely. The moment I heard "You don't have to take it anymore," I knew my efforts had been worth it.



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