



Christian at YMCA

## **Bariatric Surgery Plus Lifestyle Change Lead to 100+ Pounds Lost for MGH Surgical Weight Loss Patient**

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Daric Christian, like many people in America, has struggled with his weight. He said it began with gaining weight in his teen years, and the weight going up and down throughout his life. He could lose weight fairly easily when he had free time in the summer and could work out a lot, but it was difficult to maintain when he went back to his job in the fall.

"There have been periods of time when I've lost substantial amounts of weight. One summer I lost about 60 pounds, but over two years gained it back plus a little more," he said. Christian's highest weight was 368 pounds, and in 2007 he started seriously worrying about his health.

"There's a family history of obesity. My father passed away at 57 from a ruptured aorta related to weight and high blood pressure," said Christian, whose age is 37.

"I told myself that if I couldn't take care of this myself, I wanted to get some help before I got into my 40s." That's why he began seriously considering gastric bypass surgery. Before Christian's insurance company would authorize the surgery, they had to visit his physician for about a year. After meeting that hurdle, he was faced with the choice of which type of surgery to undergo.

"After weighing all the different options, gastric band or gastric bypass, it just seemed the bypass surgery had a better success rate and fewer complications," he said.

"I chose to do it between semesters so I wouldn't lose work time, and had the surgery Dec. 19, 2007." Christian went into surgery weighing 362 pounds.

"I thought that people were going to think the surgery is a cop out. But I think for me it was the right choice, and it's a great tool," he said. "I was a little concerned about the Fit Family exposure, that people would think 'This guy on the list has had the surgery and everybody else is doing it the old way.'"

Some might think of it that way, but anyone who has seen Daric Christian recently can have no doubt about his commitment to his weight loss and lifestyle changes. Daric Christian appears to be literally "melting." Since he had the bariatric surgery, he has embraced the eating and lifestyle changes it requires, and lost 90 pounds in the process — so far.

"Surgery is not an easy way out. Surgery is just a tool. It's an important decision. I definitely don't regret it. With any surgery there's a risk, and people need to realize it's still quite a bit of work. You'll lose some regardless, but you still have to do the work." The surgery also means profound change in food consumption. No liquids with meals, no salads, no sugar, no fatty foods. With stomach capacity severely reduced, foods consumed must provide as much nutrition as possible by volume.

"It makes it difficult to find a place to eat out in a normal socializing way," Christian said. "Most restaurants rely on salads as their healthy food choice, but raw lettuce is just not an option right now."

But it goes beyond substantial weight loss. Christian has seized this newfound opportunity to improve his health and fitness through exercise as well.

"Part of joining the Fit Family Challenge was to make certain I didn't just lose weight in an unhealthy way. I wanted to think of the surgery as a tool and go back to weight training and a few things I had enjoyed in the past. The hope is that it would not only accelerate the weight loss, but also bring back more overall health. The great thing about the Fit Family is that you're doing it as a family, so it's positive from the start," Christian said. His family is supporting his efforts by joining him in the program. They are aware that he cannot succeed without changing dietary and activity habits that affect the whole family.

"My wife, Glenda, actually suggested the idea. She felt it would be a way to get the whole family involved. Over the course of seven months she had lost 50 pounds using a low carb diet. I had lost 50-60 with the surgery, so we came into this already having lost substantial amounts.

"We felt it would be a good thing for the family to do it together. Lots of people have different results, and I wanted to be sure that I didn't go through the surgery and then, by resuming former bad habits, gain it all back again."

Christian has also noticed improvement of chronic knee pain, which had previously contributed to weight gain by causing Christian to defer working out at the gym.

"Now if I push myself, I still don't have the kind of pain I had before," he said. The family now regularly works out at the W at K.I. Sawyer and the YMCA in Marquette.

"I have confidence that if I continue to exercise and watch what I eat, I'm never going to gain that weight back again," Christian said.

"It's kind of a good feeling."