

'A trip to the fair helped me lose over 6st!'

After struggling with her weight for years, a nightmare at the funfair for Vanessa Gregory, 29, jump-started her health kick

Strolling along the seaside promenade, my son, Jacob, beamed as he noticed what was in the distance. 'Mummy, look! A ride!' he pointed excitedly. 'Can I have a go please?' 'Of course you can,' I smiled. Me, my partner Darren, and our sons, Jacob and baby George, were on holiday in Towyn, North Wales, and as soon as Jacob spotted the bright lights of the rides on

the pier, he made a beeline for them. But as I ran after him, I was gasping for breath and struggled to keep up.

Jacob and I made our way to the queue, while Darren and George waited by the side. But as we edged closer to the front, the assistant took one look at me and

shook his head. 'I'm sorry, but you're too big for this ride,' he quietly said. He was discreet but it still felt like the whole world heard him. I grabbed George's hand and we shuffled out of the queue. 'Don't worry love,' I said. 'We'll find another ride to go on.'

At 18st, and a size 22, I knew I was big, but that ride attendant's words stung me for the rest of the holiday. As we walked down the pier, I fought back tears. I knew I had to make a change as soon as we got home.

I was only 26 and longed to wear nice clothes, such as fitted tops and dresses. But instead, I had to hide away in baggy smocks and elasticated leggings. Growing up, I'd always been bigger than my friends

BEFORE
18st 2lb
Size 20-22



Her trip to the funfair was a wake-up call



Vanessa now thrives on holiday with her family



AFTER
11st 11lb
Size 10

For breakfast, I'd have three slices of thick white toast, dripping with butter and jam. Then I'd eat the boys' leftover crusts too. For lunch I'd have a buttery cheese or ham sandwich, alongside a bag of crisps, a bar of chocolate and a fizzy drink. In the evenings, after grazing at the boys' leftovers again, I'd cook something easy from the freezer. Some nights, I'd have a pizza, other times it was chicken Kiev, oven chips or onion rings. Though I loved chocolate, my vice was baked goods, such as bread, pastries and pies.

In February 2023, I finally plucked up the courage to join a diet group. I found one called Beeweighed, which offered a personalised diet plan alongside an exercise routine and daily calorie allowance which was all based on NHS guidelines. When I walked in, I was met by the group leader, Lynda, who was so friendly and welcoming. However, it felt daunting arriving at the meeting. I weighed 18st and 2lb, and, at 5ft 7in, I knew I was incredibly overweight.

The plan was hard at first – I was used to just helping myself to chocolate and pastries whenever I fancied.

'Take it one step at a time,' Lynda gently encouraged. 'You can do this.' The support of everyone else in the group was amazing too. If ever I was having a wobbly moment, I could call on them to get me back on the track – and I did the same for them.

At Beeweighed, we were educated on the internal benefits of losing weight too and I soon

DIET BEFORE
BREAKFAST Toast and jam
LUNCH Sandwich, crisps, and chocolate
DINNER Oven chips, processed chicken, onion rings, pizza
SNACKS Chocolate, crisps, fizzy drinks

DIET AFTER
BREAKFAST Protein bar
LUNCH Omelette, salad
DINNER Stir-fry, prawns, salad
SNACKS Protein bars

realised that all the beige food I'd eaten for an energy boost actually had the opposite effect. I swapped my baked treats for fruit, raw vegetables and protein bars, and I found myself more active than ever before. I started spin classes twice a week which really helped with my weight loss. The rest of the family all ate healthily – the kids' favourite meal was jacket potato with beans, while Darren and I loved salmon with vegetable fried rice.

I grew to love my new lifestyle. In the mornings, I fasted until 11am, then I had a protein bar for breakfast. I swapped stodgy carbs for home-cooked stir-fry, prawn fried rice, omelettes and salad. I made sure that I drank two litres of water every day, too.

By September 2023, I'd lost around five stone so I celebrated with a family holiday to Tenerife with my three sisters. Normally, I'd have dreaded it, knowing I couldn't possibly wear a swimsuit or even a pair of shorts. But this time, I was the first one in my bikini, diving into the pool. I bought new, figure-hugging dresses to wear in the evenings and felt like a different person. 'You look so much younger,' everyone beamed. I felt it too!

By December 2023, I'd lost an incredible six and a half stone and dropped to a size 10. Weighing 11st and 11lb, I decided to start my own Beeweighed sessions where I lived in Crewe. The group had helped me to turn my life around, and now I love doing the same for others. The best thing – and I did the same for them.

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The kids also love the new me because I have more energy to play with them and run around. I used to just sit on a bench and watch them when we went to the park. Now, I'm tearing around after them. And of course, if we ever go to the fairground, I'm first in the queue! That day at the pier was a real turning point for me. I'd like to go back and thank the attendant who refused to let me on that ride, because he changed my life.

• To find your nearest slimming group, visit beeweighed.co.uk