

that's a transformation

I googled my way TO GORGEOUS!



My weight meant I had no energy



Me at my heaviest

Then **133** KGS



Now! **58** KGS

At 133 kilos, mum of three Fiona didn't think she had time to lose weight. But then an innocent comment jolted her into action

Fiona Wardrop, 31, Wattle Grove, NSW

Standing by my wardrobe, I grabbed a skirt and tried to wriggle into it. Glancing at my reflection in the mirror, I felt like screaming at the person staring back at me. The skirt, a size-24, didn't fit me properly. But, sighing at the pile of clothes on the bed, I didn't have time to find something better.

'Ready for school?' I called to my son Jacqob, eight.

Picking up a trail of toys and grabbing baby Zac, then three months, I wrangled him, Jacqob and my other boy, four-year-old Adam, into the car.

By the time I'd done the school run I was exhausted, and it was only 9.30am! But that's just what happens when you become a mum, right? With three kids to chase after, and a husband, Steve, 42, I hardly had a spare second left. My life had ceased to be simply about me a long time ago, I realised.

I loved our family, and my little ones were my priority. But it meant my weight had become a nagging thought instead of the major concern it should have been. At 133 kilos, I was morbidly obese for my 165cm height.

I'd been steadily getting bigger for years. It started

when I was 18 and my mum, Flora, passed away from breast cancer. Devastated, I began to eat for comfort, and soon I was snacking on blocks of chocolate, chips and fatty fried foods. I was also piling my plate high at meal times. And, to be honest, from there it just became a habit.

When I went on to meet and marry Steve and have a family of my own, I thought it was the way I was wired. 'I'm never full,' I'd sigh to Steve at the end of an enormous dinner.

He loved me anyway, and I knew my children did too. But you know what kids are like – they say the funniest things. One day, Jacqob's eyes narrowed thoughtfully as he watched me eat.

'You look like a cow, Mummy,' he said, grinning as if he'd just nailed it. I knew it was just his innocent imagination talking, but his comment cut me like a knife. Is that how he saw me?

It was true. My weight was out of control. The trouble was, I'd tried and failed to diet many times before.

How would I ever change? But right then and there I

realised I had to. I'd lost my own mother far too soon. If I didn't take action, then my kids might lose their mum too. Already I was slow and lethargic. By the end of the day Steve had to make dinner and put the kids to bed as my weight meant I had no energy left.

Two weeks later, after chatting about weight loss with some friends, I took a drastic step. Logging on to my computer, I started googling the types of surgery that might be able to help me lose weight.

Steve was surprised I wanted to do something so radical. 'You are beautiful whatever your size,' he said to me. But when he saw I was determined, he vowed to support me.

I knew that it wasn't a quick fix – and when I went to see a surgeon I'd found a couple of weeks later, he agreed I had to be cautious. 'You're a binge eater,' he said. 'Surgery isn't the solution. It will start you off, but you need to commit to a changed diet and lifestyle too.'

Far from putting me off, his comments just made me

even more determined. 'I'm going to do it,' I promised.

There was another problem though. The cost. If I went ahead with the gastric sleeve surgery, I'd have to shell out \$10,000. Steve and I didn't have that kind of money lying around. 'You're a candidate for cashing in your super,' the surgeon told me.

My family history of cancer and high blood pressure meant that my weight was even more serious. Without action, my life was likely to be cut short.

It was horrible to hear, but it meant I could apply to access my superannuation savings. I knew it was my only chance. My application was approved, and in September 2012 I was booked in for my operation.

To prepare, I went on a diet of shakes to limit the amount of fat around my liver. In two weeks, I lost an incredible 11 kilos.

'This is just the start,' I thought as I was wheeled into theatre.

And it was. During the sleeve gastrectomy procedure, a large portion of my stomach was removed, reducing it to around 25 per cent of its original size.

Although I woke up feeling groggy and sore, the op was a success, and I recovered on a temporary diet of liquids and pureed food. Within just three months I'd lost a huge 42 kilos.

'I'm sorry I doubted you,' my surgeon said, even calling me his star patient!

As promised, I didn't think of my op as the solution

though. I worked with a dietitian to overhaul my lifestyle – forever.

Out went the fast food, heavy carbs and soft drinks, and in came the salads, grilled fish and veggies. Instead of getting in the car, I started walking Jacqob to school every day too. I'll never forget the day he pulled me inside the gates.

'See, I told you my mum was beautiful,' he yelled. I almost burst into tears of happiness!

Within eight months I'd hit my target weight of 52 kilos. I had lost 81 kilos and was down to a skinny size eight.

'My sister looks gorgeous,' my brother Steve, 50, told me one night. I felt so proud.

My weight loss did leave me with a lot of saggy bits, so in November last year I went under the knife again. During a seven-hour procedure, I had a tummy tuck. I also had breast implants to complete my transformation. These days I'm a new woman and my attitude towards food has changed forever.

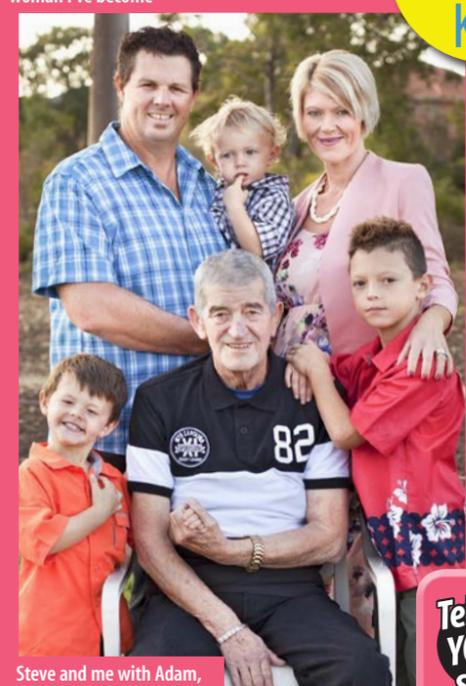
Sadly, my dad Charlie passed away in April, but instead of turning to carb-laden snacks for comfort, I've vowed to stay fit and healthy in his honour.

It's been a long, hard road, but now at 58 kilos, I'm a shadow of my former self. I'm so proud of the woman I've become. ■

As told to Emma Levett



I'm proud of the woman I've become



Steve and me with Adam, Zac, Jacqob and my dad

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