"I Lost 85 Pounds"

After: 135 pounds

The alarming diagnosis that spurred Natalia Prieto to get fit after having three kids.

A Doctor's Diagnosis

Name: Natalia Prieto
Age: 27
Height: 5'5"
Pounds Lost: 85
Time at Current Weight: 12 months

Growing up in a large Mexican family, Natalia Prieto ate her fill of tacos and enchiladas. Still, she stayed slim by dancing in a folk ensemble that performed at festivals. "It was a real workout; I would get off-stage sweaty and exhausted," recalls the 27-year-old mom from Rockford, Illinois. But at age 19, she stopped dancing and started eating fast food. Because of her hectic schedule, she also never lost the pregnancy weight after having three children, which pushed her weight to 220 pounds. In May 2005, she made a doctor's appointment to discuss her escalating weight. "The doctor figured out that my BMI [body mass index, or measure of body fat based on height and weight] was 31 and he told me I was clinically obese. I went home and cried," she says.

When the tears dried, Natalia grew determined to get healthy. She took advantage of the babysitting service at her YMCA and did an hour of cardio every day and 30 minutes of weight training four times a week. She also revamped her diet, swearing off greasy burgers and sugary snacks for whole grains, fruits, and veggies. Soon Natalia had more energy and was losing about two pounds a week. Within six months, she had dropped 78 pounds; within four more, she reached her goal weight of 135. She was so inspired by her health kick that she became a certified personal trainer. Today she feels more like the girl in the Mexican dance costume than a tired mom of three. "I can run around with my kids and feel great wearing a bathing suit. I feel cute and sexy again!"