

# 6 I comfort ate my way up to 15 stone 9

August 2002



Sharleen, pictured with her son Bryce, had started slimming down for her wedding when the picture (left) was taken. However, just over a year later (right), after the birth of her daughter, she was back up to 14st

» Sharleen Twyman, 28, is looking and feeling great after shedding 5½st twice in the past three years!

December 2003



## before

**S**tarting my first job – as a trainee fitness instructor at the local gym – it didn't even cross my mind that I would one day be trying to run off my fat on the treadmill. Aged 16 and about 9½st, I was slightly stocky for my height – just 5ft 2in – but I certainly didn't have a weight problem. And my active lifestyle meant I was very fit.

'But all that changed after my first pregnancy. My little boy Bryce was born in February 1996, when I was 19, and after the birth I found it impossible to shift the 3½st I'd gained while pregnant. Over the next five years I became a classic yo-yo dieter – I'd eat next to nothing one day, then "treat myself" the next with a ridiculous amount of fatty food – peanut-butter sandwiches, sausage rolls, cheese and bacon turnovers, crisps, Mars bars and Chinese takeaways.

### 'the big girl'

'By 2001, I was 13st, and I hated myself.

better about themselves when they saw me. I was still fit and keeping on top of the teaching, although being so overweight did make it harder. At home, my partner Paul, now 28, seemed to genuinely love my body, even though it was now over 3st bigger than

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when we'd met. But my reluctance to meet new people, or to wear anything more revealing than a sweatshirt, was restrictive. And I covered myself up in summer, too. I absolutely refused to take Bryce swimming – I didn't want to be seen in a swimsuit.

'Paul and I were planning to marry that August and I was beginning to fret about how I'd look on the day. But our plans were eclipsed by the sudden death of my grandfather, Fred, who'd always been a very special person in my life. He'd learned in March 2001 that he

he died only a month later, Paul and I decided to cancel everything.

### wake-up call

'I went on a binge, trying to comfort eat my way out of my grief. My weight rocketed and by October 2001 I was at an all-time high of 15st. Over the next few months I made a real effort to cut down on my portion sizes and do more exercise, and gradually got back down to 12st. But then I developed a horrendous pain in my back. My GP explained I had gallstones – painful fatty lumps in my gall bladder caused by eating too much fat. I was given two choices. Either I had my gall bladder removed or I had to follow a very low-fat diet. It was just the wake-up call I needed. I finally had to put all my good intentions into practice. And, as eating any fatty food caused me acute pain, it was easy to stick to my new regime.

'Paul and I rescheduled our wedding for December 2002. By sticking to healthy low-fat meals, reducing portion sizes and keeping up the exercise, I gradually shed weight over the course of the year and by the time my

wedding day came, I was a trim 9st 6lb and felt fantastic. Plus, I felt as if I'd kept my side of my bargain with my grandfather, too.

### history repeating itself

'Three months after our wedding, we discovered I was pregnant with our second child. You'd think I'd have learned my lesson from the last time, but no. Once again, I let my pregnancy be an excuse to gain weight. I didn't work out as much as usual, and hormonal changes meant my gall

rolls, cheese and bacon turnovers, crisps, Mars bars and Chinese takeaways.

## 'the big girl'

'By 2001, I was 13st, and I hated myself. At work, I heard people describe me as "the big girl", and I knew that wasn't a good image for the industry I was in – even if the women attending my aerobics classes felt

August and I was beginning to fret about how I'd look on the day. But our plans were eclipsed by the sudden death of my grandfather, Fred, who'd always been a very special person in my life. He'd learned in March 2001 that he had lung cancer – and he'd struck a deal with me: if I could lose weight for my wedding, he'd make sure he'd be there for the day. But he was ill beyond his control and when

from the last time, but no. Once again, I let my pregnancy be an excuse to gain weight. I didn't work out as much as usual, and hormonal changes meant my gall bladder could suddenly cope with fatty foods again. The combination was disastrous and, after baby Maddi was born on 29 November 2003, I was back

108 [www.zest.co.uk](http://www.zest.co.uk)

up to 14st. But this time I was determined not to let it stick. I celebrated the New Year by resolving to get my figure back – and fast. I walked Bryce to and from school, started attending Step classes and working out in the gym. Then, when I stopped breast-feeding last February, I made a conscious effort to reduce my portion sizes. I stopped snacking on junk food and embarked on a healthier diet – eating a cereal bar for breakfast, a lean sandwich and low-fat crisps for lunch, fruit in the afternoon and pasta or a healthy ready meal in the evening. I was due back at work as a fitness instructor and didn't want to be "the big girl" again. And, although I was 11½st when I returned, I felt I was really making progress.

## getting a kick

'Spurred on by being back in the gym environment, I took a training course in Bodycombat – a choreographed martial-arts programme, which I love. It's such an energetic class, working your legs through kicks and your arms through punches into the air. When I started teaching up to six Bodycombat and other classes a week last summer, the weight fell off. I was working twice as hard at my classes because I had to do all the jumps and kicks while still talking. I also got myself back into the habit of training in the gym three times a week. My usual routine is a five-mile run on the treadmill, followed by 20 minutes of working out with weights.

'By the time Maddi was nine months old, I was down to 8½st. It's the smallest I've ever been, but it feels right for my height, and for 2005 my New Year's resolution is to keep to my new weight. There's nothing nicer than seeing my size-10 jeans look a little loose and being able to pick what I like off the rail in a clothes shop, knowing I have the body to do it justice. I'm so much happier – and that has had knock-on benefits for the whole family. But doesn't anyone else feel like

real success

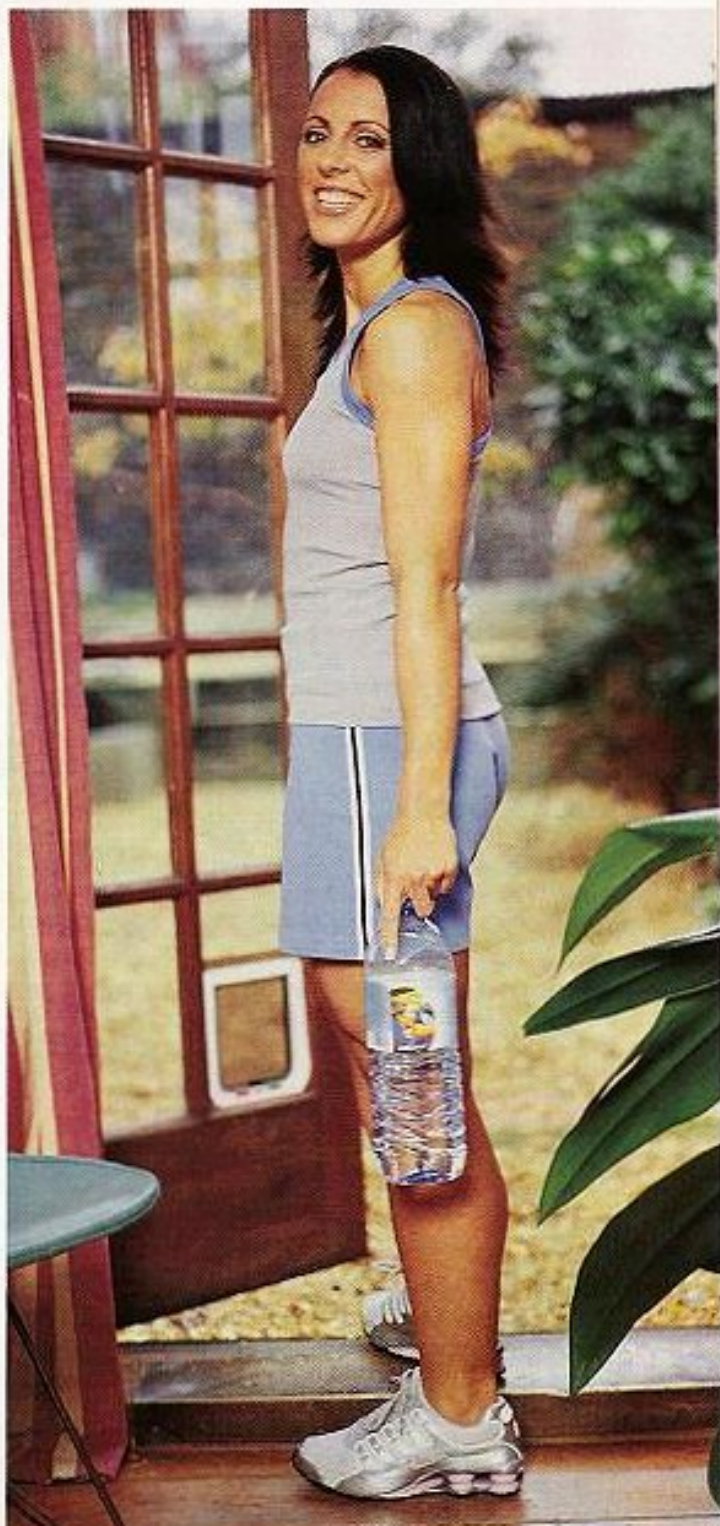
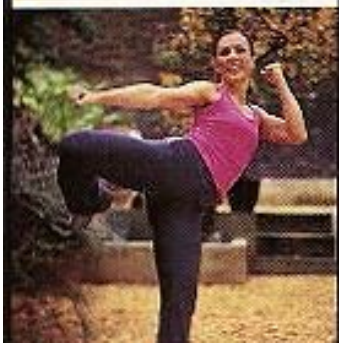


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being able to pick what I like off the rail in a clothes shop, knowing I have the body to do it justice. I'm so much happier – and that has had knock-on benefits for the whole family. Paul doesn't worry about me feeling low and Bryce and Maddi finally have a mum who not only takes them swimming, but now wears a bikini to do it!' □



after

**HEIGHT 5FT 2IN BEFORE 15ST, SIZE 18, BMI 38.4 AFTER 8ST 7LB, SIZE 8/10, BMI 21.8**

**DIET** 'I ask myself two questions. Is it low fat? And is it a small portion? I find portion-controlled, low-fat ready meals a godsend.'

**MOTIVATION** 'I will never forget how awful I felt about myself when I was big. I couldn't wear anything more revealing than a sweatshirt.'

**EXERCISE** 'With Bodycombat, I've found something I love and always look forward to. Enjoying exercise really is a constant motivator.'