

**SHIRA L. MILLER, 33, Georgia**

■ Inches lost: bust 5; waist 9; hips 5; thighs 4½ ■ Height: 5' 4" ■ Pounds lost: 50



### WORKOUT SCHEDULE

Spinning classes: 45 minutes/3 times a week  
 Elliptical training or stair climbing: 45 minutes/  
 2 times a week  
 Weight training: 45 minutes/4 times a week

### MAINTENANCE TIPS

1. Pick exercise activities you enjoy so you'll look forward to them.
2. Enjoy smaller portions of your favorite foods.
3. Weight training, combined with cardio workouts, will keep your metabolism high and help you lose weight.

Until my mid-20s, I believed chocolate was the cure for any crisis. Whether it was a fight with my boyfriend or a conflict at work, I turned to candy bars, chocolate ice cream or cookies for comfort. As a result, I gained 20 pounds and tried various diets to try and slim back down. Of course, none of them worked and my weight would always return to where it was when I started. After a while, I thought I was destined to be heavy.

This cycle continued through my 20s after I married my first boyfriend. The relationship was emotionally draining because my husband was controlling and constantly influenced me to question my self-worth. To cope with the strain, again, I turned to food and gained 30 pounds in two years. I saw myself in the mirror one day and noticed how those extra pounds added years to my appearance. I was miserable.

Knowing that things were beyond my control, I sought the advice of a psychologist, who helped me realize I used food to nurse my poor self-esteem. After each therapy session, I felt more confident about myself and with that confidence, I started to exercise. A friend invited me to a step-aerobics class and I became hooked. I signed up for three classes a week and usually went before work, which gave me a sense of accomplishment and put me in a good mood for the rest of the day. Plus, I started to lose weight.

After six months of therapy, I realized I deserved to be happy and feel good about myself. I separated from my husband and used exercise, not chocolate, to get through the difficult period. Leaving my husband gave me the chance to make my health and well-being my No. 1 priority.

I drank eight glasses of water a day and kept a food diary to record what I ate and why I ate it. I also cut out chocolate because I didn't want to be tempted to overeat. Slowly but surely, I lost 25 pounds in five months. When my weight plateaued, I did some research on nutrition and made more significant changes to my diet. I cut out high-calorie, high-fat foods and scaled back my portion sizes. I lost another 20 pounds in six months and reached my goal of 130 pounds. My self-esteem soared and I never felt better.

Over the next five years, I maintained my weight loss and in order to build definition, I started weight training. At first, I disliked it because it seemed like a chore, but after a month, not only did I see definition in my arms, but I lost another 5 pounds and reached 125 pounds. I have maintained this weight for the last two years, and these days I feel like I have a whole new lease on life.