

## WILLIE GONZALEZ

Although Willie Gonzalez has a fused ankle that causes him pain, he tries to walk a mile and half a few times a week.

Willie started walking when he found out he had diabetes. He attended one of Mary Ann Finn's (a health educator) classes and she advised him that walking could bring his blood sugar down. Since his wife was already walking, having her support made it that much more motivating for Willie to start walking himself. He wanted to make sure he put his best effort into managing his diabetes. Willie reports that he has several friends who have had amputations because they couldn't control their diabetes. His fear of losing a foot or a limb is what keeps him trying his best, even though his ankle is often painful and he has difficulty walking.

Willie said that bad weather, such as rain, sometimes keeps him from walking. He also has pain in his ankle, which makes it harder to walk, but he just keeps going a bit at a time. He walks four times around the field whenever he can. He tries to do it regularly because he knows that walking will keep him mobile and help keep his blood sugar under control.

Willie gives his wife a lot of credit for his good health habits. "My wife is the one that supports me and keeps me going and kicks me, you know, when I don't do what she says." Willie laughs when he says this.

"I lost quite a bit of weight and that was mostly from a diet that my wife put me on." Willie noticed that losing weight gave him much more energy and that helped him with his walking. So he identified a positive cycle - walk, lose weight, feel more energy. Then because you feel more energy, you can walk more!

In addition to feeling more energy, Willie has noticed that his blood pressure is easier to control as are his blood sugar levels.

Willie reports that he walks because he feels he has to in order to take care of himself. He has lost about 35 pounds, and knows this has made a great difference in his diabetes management.

All in all, Willie Gonzalez has done a great job walking, even when it is difficult, bringing his weight down, eating a healthier diet and thus controlling his blood sugar and high blood pressure.

### *Willie's Advice*

1. Start slow and build up. Do a little bit at a time each day.
2. When you feel better, give it a little more time.
3. Learn about diabetes-related complications. Know what can happen if you don't take care of yourself.