

A weight loss journey sans a nutritionist, gym, and a coach: How it all worked out

Consistency, a self-made diet plan, and overcoming mental challenges helped Chennai-based Niraj Jha lose 57 kilos. He shares his story, and what it takes to be patient and keep at it

Updated – April 23, 2025 11:23 am IST

NIRAJ JHA



Niraj Jha | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

If someone had told me two years ago that I would lose over 50 kilos without setting foot in a gym or giving up real food, I would not have believed it. But here I am—healthier, sharper, and more confident than I have been in years. My transformation, however, did not begin with a fitness influencer or a fad diet. It began in a hospital bed.

Over the past decade, my body has been through an unrelenting series of medical challenges—each one demanding its own kind of resilience. From a heart attack to chronic infections, surgeries, and even a near-fatal road accident, it has been a continuous test of endurance. Physical pain is one thing, but the emotional toll of living in constant recovery mode is something else entirely.

At my heaviest, I weighed 144 kilos—a number that didn't just show up on the scale, but in every aspect of my life. I had outgrown more than just my clothes; I had outgrown the energy and confidence I once took for granted. Everyday tasks left me breathless. My sleep was broken. And slowly, without realising it, I had started slipping away from the person I once was.

I wasn't someone who lived an indulgent or careless life. In fact, I had tried to lose weight many times. But each time I gathered the will to begin, my health threw me off track.

It was frustrating not because I was not trying, but because life kept getting in the way. Over time, the cycle took a toll. I began gaining more weight, developed sleep issues, and struggled with constant fatigue. When your health becomes unpredictable, it quietly chips away at your sense of control. You're not just dealing with pain or procedures—you're also navigating fear, isolation, vulnerability, and the exhausting cycle of hope and relapse. Add to that the silent effects of sleep apnea and chronic fatigue, and it becomes harder to distinguish where the physical discomfort ends, and the emotional struggle begins.

Everything changed in late June 2023, when I was hospitalised again. This time, a doctor suggested that I use a BiPAP machine to help me sleep better. That small intervention became the turning point. For the first time in years, I slept through the night and woke up refreshed. That single improvement gave me the energy and the courage to take the first step towards the new me. I began walking. I gave up alcohol to cut out empty calories. From that point on, I didn't look back.



(Left) Niraj before his transformation and (right) Niraj currently. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

I didn't follow any crash diet or subscribe to anything extreme. It took me a while to figure out what would work for me, however. I loved my tandoori chicken and yummy paneer butter masala, the naans, and the oh-so-tasty parathas. I had read enough to know that a daily calorie limit was the starting point. In the beginning, I didn't think much about nutrients—I just focused on staying within the calorie limit.

Over time, I realised that the nutritional quality of my food matters as much as the quantity, if not more. I started making changes and started feeling noticeably better when I shifted to a more mindful, balanced approach with the right foods. Soon, I was paying closer attention to eating enough proteins, the right (moderate) amount of fats, loading up on

low-carb vegetables, cutting out unnecessary carbs, and limiting fruits and beverages. And no alcohol at all. I made my own meal plan—something that would satisfy me both physically and mentally, without feeling like punishment. Eventually, I realised that a high-protein, low-carb, high-fat diet suited my body best.

The trick was also keeping my meals simple and consistent. Chicken, eggs, paneer, fish, curd/Greek yoghurt, and green vegetables became my friends, and I made it a point to eat three proper meals a day while ensuring I never skipped breakfast. I realised soon enough that if the monotony works for you, there is no harm in being repetitive.

While green tea became a morning and evening beverage favourite, breakfast usually included lightly roasted paneer or stir-fried mushroom or chicken sausages, a couple of eggs (boiled or omelette, sometimes with cheese), curd, and an occasional small portion of fruit. For lunch, I stuck to two small chapatis, two low-carb veggies (like cabbage, cauliflower, beans, mushroom, beetroot, etc.), a protein source like chicken or fish, and curd or Greek yoghurt. For dinner, I stick to grilled chicken or fish, sometimes a salad or tikka, and eggs or paneer.

What worked: Niraj's personal checklist

- * Calorie deficit - the only scientifically proven way to burn fat.

- * A calorie tracker app - I use the free version of MyFitnessPal to help me keep calories in check without any guesswork.

- * Weighing food - The only way to control portions accurately.

- * Staying well-hydrated - drinking water through the day

- * Proper sleep -the body needs it to recover and burn fat efficiently.

- * Eat what you enjoy within your plan - this isn't a temporary fix, it's a lifestyle shift.

- * And most importantly, staying consistent - results come with time.

No intense workouts were needed. Walking daily and staying disciplined with my diet made all the difference. I did not hire a trainer, join a gym, or consult a nutritionist this time—and that was a conscious choice. Every time I had joined a gym in the past, the workouts suggested by trainers would quickly burn me out. The pace was too much, especially at my heaviest; and I knew I wouldn't be able to sustain it. I did a lot of reading and learned something crucial: fat loss is driven far more by diet than exercise—nearly 80% of the work is what you eat, followed by moderate movement and good rest. The tougher challenge, however, was mental. There were weeks when nothing seemed to change. I constantly reminded myself: I didn't gain this weight overnight, so how could I expect to lose it overnight? I focused on small, repeatable habits. I tracked my food. I created routines. And gradually, things started shifting.

It all came down to discipline. Fancy plans or short bursts of motivation wouldn't get me there—only consistency would. I followed what I now call the 3Es: Eat right, Exercise regularly, and Eliminate excuses. My clothes got looser. I had to dig out jeans I hadn't worn in over a decade. I started recognising myself again, not just in the mirror, but in the way I felt.

Eventually, I began sharing my journey on Instagram. I just wanted to share what was working for me in an honest, relatable way. To my surprise, people started listening. They said my journey gave them hope—and if I could do it, so could they.

So far, I've lost 57 kilos and I'm still going. Today, I'm working on a simple, no-nonsense guide to weight loss and offering personalised consultations. Not as a nutritionist or fitness coach, but as someone who's been through it, who understands the struggles, and who wants to help others feel like themselves again.

The weight loss journey isn't about chasing a number. It's about showing up for yourself. It's about reclaiming your energy, your joy, and your life.

Niraj is on Instagram @fitwithNBJ