

Leticia's Story: **One Woman's Path to Better Health** by Carlos Hinojosa

I recently had the privilege of visiting with a kind woman named Leticia, who wanted to share her story with other patients and the community. Her husband was in for an appointment with his doctor at FHC's Main Site, and both she and her daughter came to the appointment with him –they call themselves “The Three Musketeers” because they're always together. Leticia shared with me a little bit about her experience with Family Health Center.

Leticia has been a patient of Waco's Family Health Center for over four years, and had been suffering with back pain that greatly affected her mobility. Signs of other health concerns were also starting to show - notably diabetes and high blood pressure. Family Health Center physician Dr. Burritt Hess referred her to the Wellness Center at the Madison Cooper Clinic, and provided her with counseling on how diet and exercise would help improve her blood pressure and other lab results.

Leticia made her first visit to the Wellness Center, and she wasn't quite sure what to expect. Immediately she was greeted by friendly staff and encountered several people doing various types of exercise. She had always enjoyed exercise, but didn't have easy or affordable access to a gym – so she was so happy to be able to come to the Wellness Center! The staff members gave her the lay of the land, and then started her off on the treadmill. It was hard at the beginning, and she was only able to walk about five minutes.

Leticia admits she was sore that first week, and it took a little while to get used to exercising again. She reported that the second week was a little easier, and she was able double her time on the treadmill to 10 minutes per session. After the first month, results were obvious. Leticia had worked her way up to 25 minutes per session on the treadmill, and had even started using the elliptical trainer. She was thrilled that her back was hurting less – plus she had more energy and noticed that she was losing weight.

Leticia's hard work at the gym also came with other lifestyle changes. Her team of caregivers was able to counsel her on some changes to her diet, and she followed them closely. After three months with her new approach, Leticia had lost 27 pounds, was more energetic, and was unstoppable at home. Household chores were previously a challenge for her, but she says that she now has trouble stopping. Leticia's daughter calls her mother “The Energizer Bunny” because she seems to have endless energy around the house!

The lifestyle changes Leticia has implemented have also had a dramatic effect within her family. They are all making healthier choices – specifically eliminating sugary drinks and consuming less at each meal. They are also all exercising more regularly thanks to Leticia's enthusiasm and their own Wellness Center prescriptions provided by Family Health Center physicians. The whole family is excited by the positive changes they see. Leticia's husband has also seen a reduction in his weight and improved lab results because of the changes he has made.

Leticia wants to make sure everyone knows about the Wellness Center, and she wants to encourage folks to use it. I asked her if she had any advice for someone who was going to visit the Wellness Center for the first time and might be scared they couldn't reach their goals – she immediately offered this encouragement: “Si, se puede,” which means “Yes, you can!”