

Jeremiah Smith has always been an active guy. He grew up wrestling and working with his dad doing odds and ends. He was taught to never slow down or quit until the job was done. As he started to age and saw others in his family suffer from health issues, Jeremiah decided it was time to make a change. "My main goal for bariatric surgery was to avoid the heart and stomach issues my dad had," said Jeremiah. "I knew the quality of life I wanted, and health issues would have prevented me from living that way." Jeremiah's family physician mentioned bariatric surgery as an option and he followed up with surgeon Ovie Appresai, M.D., to learn more. In September 2021, Jeremiah had gastric bypass surgery. When he started, he weighed 325 pounds. Less than three months later, he was down to 228.

How has he lost the weight? "I never stop moving," said Jeremiah. Whether he's kayaking, working on his vehicles, or tending to his goats and chickens, he's always staying busy. Even though Jeremiah has seen success with the surgery, he cautions others not to jump right in without first doing their research. "Bariatric surgery is a major lifestyle change," said Jeremiah. "My advice to anyone considering it is talk to the doctors, go to Cape Fear Valley's support group and try other diets first."

Jeremiah loved eating doughnuts and going to the buffet, but now that's not an option. "This is a permanent medical procedure that not a lot of people are ready for," said Jeremiah. "It involves a huge lifestyle change that's hard for some to deal with." Leaning on the support group helped, as did following all the directions given to him by Dr. Appresai and the team at Cape Fear Valley.

"Now that I have had the surgery," said Smith. "I have lost a bunch of weight and it's only the beginning. I'm going to continue to be active and continue to lose the weight. This surgery is a chapter in my life that's going to change the course of my story."