Diagnosed with Type II Diabetes in 2003, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee lost 110 pounds by eating healthy and working out regularly. Huckabee once tipped the scales at close to 300 pounds from years of overeating and a lack of exercise, but in 2006 he gets healthy enough to run the New York City Marathon.
Transcript

Governor Huckabee Discusses His Weight Loss

LESTER HOLT, co-host:
Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee is eyeing a possible run for the White House in 2008, but this weekend he's focusing on a much different kind of race, the 36th annual New York City Marathon. Before Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee looked like this, he looked like this. Years of smoking, overeating and a lack of exercise had caught up to Huckabee, and at his peak, he tipped the scales at close to 300 pounds.

Governor MIKE HUCKABEE (Republican, Arkansas): (At news conference) Yes, ma'am.

HOLT: On top of that, he suffered from chest pains and was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 2003. His doctors told Huckabee to start paying attention to his body or suffer the consequences.

Gov. HUCKABEE: My doctor sat me down and said, `Look, you either change your lifestyle or you're in the last decade of your life.'

HOLT: The governor took the advice to heart and, in the three years since, has lost 110 pounds by eating right...

Offscreen Voice: (At race) Hey, come on, Governor, let's go!

HOLT: ...and pounding the pavement. He's become an avid runner and follows a strict exercise regimen, routinely running up to 20 miles a week despite 20-hour work days. He's also championed projects aimed at reducing obesity in his state, calling for restaurants to publish the caloric and fat contents of their food.

And Governor Huckabee joins us here this morning. Good morning to you.

Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, good morning, Lester.

HOLT: I'm suddenly feeling way out of shape talking to you and watching that amazing story. First of all, let me ask how you're feeling. You had some problems with the knee. You still going to run this weekend?

Gov. HUCKABEE: Yeah, I plan to. The doctor's given me a clearance. One of the things about the knee, I think a lot of people are thinking that was helping me to lower the expectations because everyone thought
I would beat Lance Armstrong this weekend.
HOLT: Right.
Gov. HUCKABEE: I'm going to say, `No, it's the knee that's going to keep me from doing that.'
HOLT: So you're eating the carbs right now, getting ready for the big race.
Gov. HUCKABEE: Absolutely.
HOLT: You know, we were sitting here--you, too--we were watching the monitor a moment ago...
Gov. HUCKABEE: Yeah.
HOLT: ...and, like, `Who is that man?'
Gov. HUCKABEE: Yeah, I know. It's hard to believe.
HOLT: You don't recognize that Governor Huckabee, do you?
Gov. HUCKABEE: No. You know, and it's hard it believe that it wasn't that many years ago that, you
know, I was carrying around more than 100 pounds more than now. But I feel better now, at age 51, than I
felt when I was 18 years old.
HOLT: But how did you feel when you were that size, when you were carrying all that weight? What was
life like for you?
Gov. HUCKABEE: You know, I didn't know that you were supposed to feel better than that. I guess when
you don't have anything to compare it to--so I was tired. I got my work done. I worked hard, did
everything that I needed to do, but I was fatigued, and I just did not have the kind of energy and I had to
push myself all the time.
HOLT: You are a role model to a lot of people because of your adherence to this new health regimen. But
a lot of people look at this, you're a governor, I mean, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20-hour days sometimes. How do
you find time to stick with it?
Gov. HUCKABEE: Yeah.
HOLT: Which is what a lot of folks who work half your hours have trouble coming up with.
Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, Lester, I tell people I don't find time, I make it. I looked at my schedule and I
said, `I have time to do ribbon cuttings and meetings and speeches and ground breakings and all these
things that I do every day. How come I do those things? Because they're on the calendar. They get on the
schedule.' And what I had to realize is if my health was important to me and exercising was critical, I had
to put that on the schedule just as if it were something as important as having a meeting or making a
speech.
HOLT: So a priority in your life. But let me ask you this--I mean, we've seen a lot of people go through
amazing weight reduction and exercise regimen...
Gov. HUCKABEE: Yeah.
HOLT: ...but it's still a big stretch to go from there to running 26 miles. This is going to be your third
marathon.
Gov. HUCKABEE: Fourth.
HOLT: Fourth.
Gov. HUCKABEE: Fourth marathon, yeah.
HOLT: How did you--I mean, how did you build up to that point where, `I can run 26 miles'?
Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, I started it as a challenge when some people told me that I ought to try it. I said, ‘You're crazy. I might as well fly the space shuttle or do brain surgery. I can't run a marathon. I have two terribly flat, big, huge 13-size foot.’ I had two knee surgeries on this one, one on this one, and I've never been an athlete in my life. And I said, ‘I can't do that,' and they said, ‘Give it a try.' And it's all about training and incremental. And you find that the human body and, really, the human spirit is capable of amazing things. You know, I'm no great runner--I'm not at all--but I'm just a person who puts one foot in front of the other and keeps doing it until I get to the 26-mile point. One thing I do, I'll carry around with me tomorrow a little lanyard, a laminated card. I have names of 26 people, family, friends, people who've helped me to get here...

HOLT: Mm-hmm.

Gov. HUCKABEE: ...my doctors and others. And each mile is dedicated to one of them, so that every mile I'll look down there and remember who helped me make it.