



# I Overcame Chronic Fatigue After Going Plant-Based

By Edith Ellen Smith  
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*Severe fatigue, high cholesterol, chronic pain, and constant migraines left Edith with a low quality of life—until her sister inspired her to change her diet.*

Just a few years ago, I had such severe fatigue that I slept as much as 12 hours a day. When I wasn't asleep, I often walked around with my eyes closed, my hand on my husband's arm, because holding them open was too difficult. Cardiologists, neurologists, months of tests didn't find an answer. People would say, "You're only as old as you feel." My response was that if that was the case, I was 90.

## Plant-Based Inspiration

My sister, Sandra, had high cholesterol (as did I). Sandra had been a nurse and knew the benefits of whole-food, plant-based eating, so in January 2017 she decided to give it a try. Within a few months, her cholesterol dropped to normal.

By September that year, I knew I was going to follow Sandra's lead, but I waited until January 1, 2018, after the holidays, to get started. Sandra came to my house with her car loaded with food and kitchen tools. She cooked several dishes for me and shared some of her tips. She warned me that, at first, I'd make many dishes I wouldn't like, but not to get discouraged.

I took three weeks to wean off soda, to avoid the severe migraines that I used to develop when not drinking caffeine. But from the fourth week of January onward, I never (knowingly) ate anything out of line with WFPB guidelines.

## Swift Results

By the second week of March 2018, my fatigue totally vanished. Although I still lacked some muscle strength and stamina, I felt like a new person. Soon my cholesterol reached a normal level. My migraines went from 10 days per month to almost nonexistent. Joint pain, which previously had woken me up every hour through the night, almost totally disappeared.

I am now 63 and one year into eating healthy. I'm off almost all prescription medications. I walk a minimum of two miles almost daily. Weight loss has been a wonderful side effect: I've lost 55 pounds. I feel younger than I did 10 years ago. My husband tells people that this way of eating gave me my life back.

## My Personal Rules for Plant-Based Success

1. I do not eat meat, dairy, oil, or added sugars. I eat whole-food, plant-based, no-oil only.
2. I eat as much as I want, which is a *lot* of food. I do not go hungry. Period.
3. I don't eat anything I don't like, otherwise I won't be able to maintain the WFPB way of eating for life.
4. I often (cheerfully) cook two separate meals when my family is home. I wouldn't have liked for WFPB to be pushed on me, so I don't push it on others.
5. I always take snacks with me if there is a chance that I could get hungry or tempted when I'm away from home all day. A small cooler sits right by the refrigerator for such times.
6. When traveling out of town, instead of getting fast-food, I stop at a grocery store to pick up fruit, vegetables, whole-food, plant-based bread, and other supplies.
7. I keep my kitchen fully stocked with my food staples (oatmeal, walnuts, canned beans, etc.). I buy more *before* I run out. I don't allow myself the excuse of being out of something to eat non-WFPB.
8. I store my food in containers that keep it fresh, visible, and easy to access. Dried beans are in jars. Spices are in a rack right by my stove.
9. I print out recipes and place them in a notebook. I make notes and changes on the printouts to fit my and my family's tastes. (Examples: "No currants, use raisins instead," "Leave out the tomato paste," or "too soupy, leave out a cup of liquid.")
10. I write the date on the lids of all cooked foods in

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my refrigerator, using stickers or masking tape and a Sharpie. This helps me to eat the oldest first, before it goes bad.

11. When I'm in a restaurant, I explain to the server that I have some health issues and can't eat meat, dairy, eggs, oil, or sugar. I make the focus my health.

*Ready to get started? Check out our [Plant-Based Primer](#) to learn more about adopting a whole-food, plant-based diet.*