



From Couch Potato to Avid Cyclist: My Plant-Based Transformation

By David Gwyn
May 13 2020

In the fall and winter of 2017 I was traveling a lot and eating at restaurants with colleagues who always wanted the biggest piece of American beef on the menu. I caved to the peer pressure and joined them. By Christmas of 2017, I was the heaviest I had ever been. I felt lethargic and simply awful. I decided to use New Year's Day 2018 as a fresh start and resolved to become vegetarian.

As a vegetarian, I still ate lots of cheese and eggs. When traveling I'd start every morning with an omelet from the hotel. By October, I hadn't lost much weight. In fact, I had done little more than make my life more difficult when dining out.

After reading *The Cheese Trap* by [Neal Barnard, MD](#), I decided to drop the dairy and go completely plant-based. Within two days I noticed a significant improvement in sinus issues that I'd long experienced.

Powering Ahead

With newfound energy I set out on a quest to eliminate my need for blood pressure medicine by sticking with a healthy plant-based diet and adopting a workout routine. I hired a vegan fitness coach, Ben Raue, and began my transformation journey. I also signed up for the [Forks Over Knives cooking course](#), which has had a tremendous impact on my ability to maintain a plant-based lifestyle while cooking delicious meals for myself and others.

During the transition, I met several obstacles. As a professional couch potato, starting a fitness program was tough. But day by day, I got fitter and was more able to complete the workouts. I started to look forward to my workout days. I saw them as opportunities to increase weights and reps and meet other fitness goals. I was still traveling, and Ben helped craft a program for me that I could take on the road and perform anywhere, using body-weight exercises and resistance bands.

My travels took me to Europe frequently, where a vegan lifestyle is not yet as common as it is in the United States. Particularly in Croatia, where the diet is heavily centered on animal products, I had a difficult time finding a meal. But it was always possible to find something to eat, even if it meant ordering a few sides instead of an entree.

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New Personal Bests

Working with my doctor, I was able to reduce my blood pressure medicine gradually and safely. Fortunately, he was extremely supportive of my lifestyle and encouraged me to keep going. With his help I was able to eventually come off all the meds, and now my BP averages 112/72. My annual blood work showed significant improvements in total cholesterol, down from 210 to 134. I've lost more than 50 pounds.

My ability to exercise has drastically improved, and I've become an avid cyclist as a result, riding more than 2,500 miles last year. This helped reduce my resting heart rate from an average of 72 to 51. I've joined my local cycling club and enjoyed many group rides and charity rides as well, doing my first century ride (100 miles) last October.

Thanks to my noticeable progress, and a whole new wardrobe, it's easy for friends to see the value of a plant-based lifestyle. Recently I had the pleasure of hearing from several colleagues that, because of my success, they wanted to try eating plant-based. Seeing families move to this way of eating has been exciting, and I look forward to sharing the message with as many people as I can for their health and the planet.

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path. To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#).