



From Sedentary Asthma Sufferer to Long-Distance Runner on a Plant-Based Diet

By Jane Elizabeth
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Growing up, [asthma](#) made me self-conscious, and I limited my physical activity because of it. I didn't want to be the girl who was out of breath after running a block or the girl who had to have her rescue inhaler with her at all times.

Not long after high school, I lost both my dad and my sister to cancer. In hindsight, it's clear that I didn't handle either loss well. I tried to keep myself so busy with work, school, and playing music that I wouldn't have time to grieve. I thought I'd managed to push the hurt aside. Really, the pain was festering within me all along. Through my 20s and early 30s, my body paid the price for my inability to deal with my emotional distress. I steadily gained weight, eating poorly and drinking alcohol almost daily.

A Reason to Change

In 2017, I completed grad school. Looking at photos from my graduation ceremony, I didn't even recognize myself because I was so overweight. My daughter was a year old at the time, and I realized that it was time to make a change. I needed to stop making excuses and take care of myself. My daughter needed to see what a healthy mom looked like—inside and out.

Wanting to be a good role model for her was exactly the motivation I needed to get my life on track. I wasn't sure exactly what I was going to do or how I was going to do it, but I knew that it was time.

I decided to try going vegan, mainly for the animals but also to see what impact it might have on my health. I transitioned to a vegan diet over the course of about a month. First I [eliminated meat](#), which was pretty easy for me, since I wasn't much of a meat eater at that point anyway. Giving up dairy, though, was difficult. But learning about the reality of the dairy industry gave me the resolve to quit it for good. As a nursing mom, it pained me to think about calves being taken from their mothers so that humans could have the milk.

Surprising Side Effects

Once I [eliminated dairy](#), something amazing happened: I discovered that I was able to run without losing my breath or using my rescue inhaler. It was a beautiful feeling.

It caused me to look more seriously into the health benefits of cutting out animal products, and I was astonished at the research I uncovered from sources such as Forks Over Knives. I became committed to a whole-food vegan diet.

Today I am 80 pounds lighter. I'm now a long-distance runner, an athlete, an active musician, and the mom I want to be. I have not had an asthma flare-up since I changed my diet. My body doesn't quit on me while I'm working out. I run between 7 and 20 miles a day. I have more energy than I did 20 years ago. I am stronger than ever.

Fitness saved me in so many ways, and I would not have been able to get fit without changing my eating habits.

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](#).