



## Forks Over Knives Changed My Health and How I Treat My Patients

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The discovery of whole-food, plant-based eating has transformed the way I think about health, both personally and professionally, all thanks to *Forks Over Knives*.

As the director of prevention and wellness at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Louis, I had always considered myself knowledgeable about the importance of diet and exercise, tried to eat "healthy," tried to stay active, and counseled my patients to do the same. My "healthy" diet centered on eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean meat, low-fat dairy products, and whole grains (although I wasn't averse to an occasional bowl of ice cream!).

In the fall of 2010, I sustained a knee injury that required surgery and didn't do a very good job with post-op rehab. The resulting decline in physical activity led to weight gain. In July 2011, I had a physical, which showed, much to my surprise, elevated cholesterol, borderline high blood sugar, and borderline high blood pressure. My primary care physician talked about putting me on cholesterol-lowering medication, but I was reluctant.

A short time later, I chanced across *Forks Over Knives* while browsing Netflix one night. After watching the film and reviewing the medical literature regarding the health benefits of plant-based diets, I realized that it would be unconscionable for me to not to try a whole-food plant-based diet for three months and then answer three questions: 1) How hard was it to shop, prepare meals, eat out, etc.? 2) How did it affect my energy level and mood? 3) At the end of three months, how did it affect my numbers (weight, blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol)? At the same time, I began to rehab my knee so I could begin exercising again.

At the end of three months, the results were nothing short of miraculous. I found that shopping for and preparing healthy, complete, flavorful meals was not nearly as difficult as I had anticipated. Eating out was more of a challenge, but many restaurants were more than willing to prepare a plant-based meal with advance notice. More amazing were the mental and physical

changes that occurred. My mood and energy markedly improved—no more sugar lows mid-morning and mid-afternoon! Also, with a minimal change in physical activity (as I was just completing my knee rehab), I lost 25 pounds, my cholesterol dropped from 240 to 150, and my blood sugars and blood pressure dropped significantly and were now in the normal range.

Since then, as I have added more exercise and continued following a whole-food, plant-based diet, I have lost almost 60 pounds total, have completed five half-marathons and four triathlons, and will soon compete in my first half-Ironman.

As I have shared this message regarding the power of whole-plant-based eating with my patients, those who have embraced it have had the same astounding results that I had, oftentimes being able to stop the medications they were taking for diabetes, cholesterol, or high blood pressure. It is now clear to me that almost every chronic disease I was trained to treat (often with the help of prescription medication) is directly or indirectly related to living a lifestyle discordant with the one we are designed to lead—we eat things we are not designed to eat, we don't eat things we are designed to eat, we don't get enough physical activity, and we deal with stress in ways we were not designed to. This discordant lifestyle has profound effects on the health of our society as well as the health of our planet, and a whole-food, plant-based diet can play a transformational role in improving both.