



Getting Healthier Together on a Plant-Based Diet

By Carrie McBride
February 10 2021

Last year, my husband and I reached a turning point in our health. After several years of gradual weight gain, our BMIs had crossed over into the [obese](#) range. I was experiencing heart palpitations that were benign in nature but were still worrisome. In addition, I was [borderline hypertensive](#), with my blood pressure routinely reaching the 135/90 range.

My husband, Steve, had already been diagnosed with [high cholesterol](#) and on medication for several years. Both of us were fatigued and experiencing daily acid reflux and heartburn. The heartburn and reflux were so bad that we were going through a large container of Tums every few weeks.

The heartburn was annoying but, being a nurse, I was more concerned about our weight. Steve's family has a long history of cardiovascular disease and early heart attack. His grandfather died at 43 of a sudden heart attack, and his father had his first of several heart attacks in his 40s. To my dismay, Steve often joked about when he would have his first heart attack.

Because we were worried about our weight, we stayed physically active—hiking, biking, walking, and lifting weights—and tried to eat what we thought was healthy. We used a lot of butter and cheese, but we bought low-fat varieties. We cooked with [olive oil](#), because we thought it was good for us. We limited our intake of red meat and ate mostly chicken, ground turkey, and some fish. We tried many times to lose weight through calorie restriction, and we would shed a few pounds here and there, but we were not able to make significant or sustainable progress.

Seeds of Change

On Aug. 5, 2020, Steve had surgery for a condition that could arguably be attributed to his weight. The seeds for our going whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) were planted while I sat in the waiting room that day. My thoughts wandered, in the way thoughts can when a loved one is under general anesthesia; I thought of how we'd only shared 17 years of marriage so far, and I didn't want to lose him. I was worried about my own health, as well, and being healthy enough to spend lots of quality time with our grandchildren someday. I started researching healthier lifestyles and came across [The Forks Over Knives Plan](#).

I ordered the book and read it. Afterward, I discussed it with Steve, and he was game right away. He had gone vegetarian a couple of times in the past and had dropped weight, but it had never been a full-on lifestyle change. This time, we were both on board and all-in.

On Aug. 10, we made the switch. We jumped in feet first and went fully WFPB—with no added sugar, salt, or oil—on Day 1. I referenced [The Forks Over Knives Plan](#) a lot at first, though we did not actually follow the plan outlined in the book. I also subscribed to [Forks Meal Planner](#) and started weekly meal prepping right away as well. Using Meal Planner and learning how to do weekly meal prep were instrumental in keeping us on track. I transformed our pantry door into a dry erase board and used it to detail our menu each week. We encouraged one another to stay on track. All in all, we found the transition pretty easy.

Within two weeks, we both noticed that our heartburn and acid reflux were gone. I did have one episode of reflux (the choking, wake-you-up-from-your-sleep kind) after eating store-bought marinara sauce that I later figured out had oil in it. Also around the two-week mark, I checked my blood pressure and was shocked to see that it was in the 115/75 range—and it continued to decrease from there. My resting heart rate, which had been in the 70s, dropped to the low 60s to high 50s.

Full of Energy, Free from Symptoms

It's been about seven months since we adopted this new lifestyle. I have more energy. I no longer have heart palpitations, and I've lost 30 pounds. (I lost the first 20 pounds within three months; the last 10 pounds came off a little more slowly.) I have a bit

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more excess weight to lose, but I know it will come off. I find that I lose about 1 pound a week, on average, just as a natural side effect of fueling my body the way it's supposed to be fueled, with whole plant foods.



Undergoing my own transformation has been great, but to watch Steve transform before my eyes has been truly amazing. He has more energy than he's had in years. In addition to losing his heartburn and acid reflux, he's lost 50 pounds. He had 34 percent body fat when we started this journey back in August; today, he's at just 20 percent body fat. Back in November, he had bloodwork done, and his doctor had no problem with discontinuing his cholesterol medication. His numbers weren't perfect yet, but they were so improved and close to the healthy range that the doctor didn't feel the medication was necessary any longer.

Meal-Prepping for Success

These days, we like to start our mornings with oatmeal, Banana Breakfast Wraps (a Forks Meal Planner recipe that Steve is especially fond of), or a chickpea scramble. (Steve is becoming quite the pro at scrambles!) On Sundays, I prepare big batches of salad and soup that we eat for lunch throughout the week. Dinner is usually something from Forks Meal Planner. That has been our routine for more than half a year now.

We are both so thankful to everyone who promotes this way of eating, this way of life. It has been the missing piece for us, and our only regret is not finding it sooner. I have no doubt that this way of eating is sustainable and that our health gains and weight loss will be sustainable, too.

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](#).