



I Dropped 100 Pounds in One Year by Ditching Animal Products, Processed Foods

By Dave Wegener
March 19 2021

I've been big for most of my life. I wasn't an obese child, but I was tall and overweight, and I knew I stood out. My parents were overweight, too. Fast-food, steak, seafood, pizza, ice cream, chips: These were the staple foods that I grew up with. I was probably at my healthiest weight during my first three years in the Air Force. In my fourth year of enlistment, I had to lose eight pounds in order to be honorably discharged.

Over the next 30 years, I got heavier. I ate whatever was cheap or convenient. Along the way, I tried losing weight with fad diets, supplements, fitness clubs, and even daily testosterone injections to try and boost my metabolism. I never lost more than 20 pounds, and I'd gain it all back, with a little more. I got used to being called "Big Guy."

Troublingly High Triglycerides Spur Changes

In March 2016, I weighed 335 pounds. Bloodwork showed that my [triglycerides](#) were 424. (The ideal range is less than 150.) This concerned my doctor, especially because I have a family history of diabetes. He wanted to put me on medication to lower my triglycerides. I refused. I wanted an alternative. So we came up with a plan. I agreed to do three things: keep a food journal; limit my daily calories; and go for a 30-minute walk every other day. We would meet again in July.

Along with the journaling, calorie counting, and walking, I began educating myself about nutrition. I watched [Forks Over Knives](#) several times and read books by the plant-based experts featured in the film. Persuaded by my enthusiasm, my wife, Leah, agreed to make changes to our kitchen routine. I even set up my office so I could prepare my own healthier meals at work. I began to see that when I chose less-processed options and ate more plant-based, the [weight](#) came off, rapidly and almost effortlessly.

At the July follow-up, my doctor was amazed. I'd lost 60 pounds in four months, and my triglycerides were excellent. At our November follow-up, I was down another 40 pounds. By January 2017, I decided to stop counting calories and fully embrace a whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) lifestyle. Leah adopted this way of eating, too.

Side Effects of a Plant-Based Lifestyle

It's been nearly five years since that March 2016 talk with my doctor. I have kept the weight off, and I have slowly, steadily continued to lose weight without counting calories and without depriving myself of foods I love.

There have been other side effects: I don't snore anymore. I don't wake up in the middle of the night dealing with acid reflux. My skin cleared up and became less oily. My legs are no longer swollen from edema. My [blood pressure](#), lipids, and other markers are stellar. I haven't had a cold or flu in four years. I can get into the crawlspace when necessary, travel comfortably in airline seats, and find more clothing options that fit. I wake up early to run or walk for more than an hour each day. Leah can wrap her arms around me completely.

Leah, too, has experienced health benefits. She no longer has any [joint pain](#). She's lost 15–20 pounds and is back to the weight she was before college.

We love how much safer our kitchen is without animal products around and how easy it is to clean up since [cooking without oils](#). We make [plant-based dishes](#) to share at parties and potlucks. Every Sunday, I make a big pot of brown rice and a large bowl of bean salsa to serve at our church fellowship hour.

Thirty-plus years of being the "Big Guy" have left a few physical and emotional scars, but I am much healthier at 56 than I was

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at 18.

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](#).