



# My Pandemic Transformation: Losing 100 Pounds in a Year on a Plant-Based Diet

By Pamela Footman  
August 19 2021

Growing up, I never had a problem with excess weight, and in fact, I tended toward being underweight. I ate meat, but I ate lots of fruits and vegetables, too. In college, I picked up some bad eating habits—like opting for [sugary cereals](#) over fruit at [breakfast](#) time—but I was young and a competitive swimmer, so there wasn't a noticeable effect.

After college, I continued to be an avid swimmer and all-around athlete. I worked as a lifeguard, water safety instructor, and scuba diver. In my late 20s and early 30s, I swam for U.S. Masters for several years, which kept me fit.

At 32, after having a baby, I developed endometriosis. I was in pain three weeks out of every month, which limited my physical activity. Gradually, I gained weight and went from a size 10 petite to a size 18. This weight stuck around for decades.

In 2014 I relocated to my childhood home to care for my mother. Over the next six and a half years, I neglected my body and my health. My mom and I ate our meals together. A typical breakfast was turkey bacon grits with butter and eggs and an English muffin. Dinner was often meatloaf, mashed potatoes with gravy, and green beans. Sometimes we'd have ice cream for dessert.

## Pandemic Lockdowns: Time for Change

Toward the end of January 2020, my lovely mother passed on in the comfort of her home at age 93 of natural causes. As pandemic lockdowns began in March 2020, I found myself with more free time, and I decided to dedicate it toward improving my health. At only 5 foot 2 and a size 18, my body mass index was in the morbidly obese range. I watched documentaries on diet and health, including [Forks Over Knives](#); [Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead](#); and [Super Size Me](#). I resolved to start on a whole-food, plant-based diet and lose 100 pounds.

It wasn't easy at first. I didn't realize how addicted my body had been to sugar. I felt like I was losing my mind. But I stayed faithful to the [vegan diet for weight loss](#) and started power walking to ease some of the tension. After a month, the withdrawal symptoms subsided. I noticed that I began [sleeping better](#) than I had before. I began consistently exercising a lot each day. I live near the beach, so I started walking seven and a half miles seven days a week, totaling 200 miles a month. When the weather became too warm to walk, I took up swimming at the local community pool, swimming 1 mile six days a week.

## Shining in My 60s

Since going plant-based last year and beginning a regular exercise routine, I've lost more than 100 pounds. I continue to sleep well, and I wake up energized and ready to start my day walking on the beach or swimming in the pool. My skin, hair, and nails are all noticeably healthier, too. At 62, I feel better than I have in decades.

*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](#).*