



After Years of Arthritis, I'm Pain-Free on a Plant-Based Diet

By Delores Rich
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I first learned about the whole-food, plant-based way of eating back in 2012. I'd been struggling with pain from arthritis and was looking for something to help with my symptoms, so I started looking into a vegan diet and the impact it can have on various health issues. And then I lost a family member to colon cancer [a disease [heavily linked](#) to red meat consumption].

That's when I really started intensely researching the connection between diet and disease. I discovered *The China Study*, and at some point I came across the documentary *Forks Over Knives*. Both made the scientific case for a whole-food, plant-based diet. Eventually, the evidence convinced me that this was the way to go, and in 2016 I went completely WFPB.

I have to admit that it was difficult to stick with it at first. I never knew how addicted I'd been to ice cream, cake, cookies, and [highly salted snacks](#) (potato chips, corn chips, etc.). But after a few weeks, my osteoarthritis symptoms began to subside, which encouraged me to stick with my new way of eating.

I began to limit my television-watching, because I noticed that the constant influx of fast-food commercials was triggering cravings for foods that I didn't want to eat. I learned to steer clear of vegan junk foods that were marketed as health foods. To help keep myself on track, I regularly rewatched *Forks Over Knives*, and I made sure to check out any other relevant documentaries—such as *What the Health*, *Eating You Alive*, and *The Invisible Vegan*—that came out.

Growing into the Plant-Based Lifestyle

For five years, I stayed committed to this way of eating, earning my certificate in plant-based nutrition through the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies at eCornell. During all this time, I didn't have any osteoarthritis flare-ups, and I saw improvements in my blood pressure readings, too, which was a wonderful side benefit, as I was diagnosed with hypertension at just 12 years old.

A couple months ago, I was at the grocery store and impulse-bought a case of instant noodles. I told myself that it would be good to have some ready-made meals on hand just in case, and that if I added fresh veggies to them, they wouldn't be too bad for me.

But after a few days of eating the instant noodles, my right knee began to pain me severely. It dawned on me that the only thing I'd been doing differently was eating those highly processed noodles. So I stopped, and my knee pain began to subside just as quickly. I tossed out the rest of the carton. I thought about donating them to a food bank, but my conscience kicked in: Why would I want someone else eating foods that might give them health problems? Yes, I wasted money purchasing them, but my health is worth more than that to me. The experience renewed my commitment to WFPB eating.

Staying the Plant-Based Course

Lately one of my go-to snacks is rutabaga fries. I slice the rutabaga into sticks; season them with a small amount of salt, black pepper, and smoked paprika; spread them out on a baking sheet; and pop them in the oven. I snack on these all night instead of unhealthy vegan junk foods.

I'm delighted that in the years since I went plant-based, many well-known people of color have begun to publicly advocate the benefits of this way of eating, including [New York City Mayor Eric Adams](#).

At my most recent doctor's appointment, my blood pressure was 117/73. My physician said, "If these numbers stay like this, we can start reducing your blood pressure medicine." After decades of struggling with hypertension, hearing those words provides all the support I need to stay committed to a whole-food, plant-based diet. It's clear that WFPB is the way to go.

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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](#).