



Since Going Plant-Based, I've Reduced My Medication Needs and Transformed my Whole Family's Meal Routine

By Rick Wasserman
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In a very short span of time, I lost my job of 15 years, I moved from a big modern home to a tiny apartment in a new town, and COVID-19 showed up in the world. I handled these changes poorly. I ate and ate. I drank more alcohol than I could pretend was “no big deal.” And I got zero exercise. I felt worthless and depressed. I knew I needed to turn things around—to model good choices for my sons, provide my wife with a dependable partner, and, perhaps most importantly, save myself from spiraling further.

I challenged myself to make some big changes. I mustered what little willpower I had left and stopped drinking—just quit, forever. Then I dared myself to step outside and go for a short run. I spent most of the time gasping for air and walking, but I did it. Soon I joined a high-intensity interval training program with energetic coaches and good music. The gym was close to the new house that my wife and I managed to purchase. Little by little, and with the support of family and friends, I was seeing changes in myself and starting to feel like the person I wanted to be.

Prescription for Change

One day I received an email from my primary care physician's office letting me know that my wonderful doctor was finally retiring. I needed to find a new one, so I did some research and found a physician who seemed promising: Daniel Pourshalimi, MD. During my first meeting with him, he performed an exam and asked me

questions about my health, including my diet. Then he said, “Rick, I am going to say this once. It is something I say to all my new patients. I won't bother you with it again unless you are interested in learning more. Most of my patients don't go through with my recommendation, but here it is: I think you should be eating whole-food, plant-based meals.”

My knee-jerk reaction was “Really? I eat pretty healthfully. Why this?” Dr. Pourshalimi was more than happy to lay out for me the diet's important [health benefits](#), not only for me but also for my wife and our two boys. He handed me a document he'd created explaining the basics of plant-based nutrition. He also told me to jot down the names of some books and documentaries to explore, among which were [The Game Changers](#) and [Forks Over Knives](#). Listening to my new doctor, I thought: “Most patients don't go through with this, huh? Well, I'm ready for a new challenge.”

After that appointment, my wife and I watched *The Game Changers*. Toward the end of the film, a man who protects animals from poachers looks into the camera and says that he realized “the easiest way to protect other animals is just not to put them in your mouth.” I looked over at our puppy, then to my wife, and knew that we'd begin the switch the next morning.

Plant-Based Kitchen Makeover

We started by going through the [refrigerator](#) and cabinets, reading every label, and removing anything that had animal products. We had very little food left. So we went shopping at a new vegan-friendly market and were surprised that our purchases were not nearly as expensive as what we were used to. Bonus!

We also reorganized our food storage, getting rid of all wasteful plastic bags and wraps, subbing in Mason jars. We stopped using paper napkins and paper towels, and we began [composting](#)! But what to cook? My vegan-recipe repertoire was woefully spare. We invited some friends over who had been vegan for years and asked if we could bend their ears for some advice while munching on some vegan takeout. They did not

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disappoint, sharing websites, books, recipes, tips and tricks, and more.

For years, I'd been preparing different meals for each member of the family due to individual issues or needs (food allergies/sensitivities, IBS, wanting to gain or cut weight, and sometimes just an aversion to a specific ingredient). So I decided I would try and find some WFPB dishes that *all* of my family members could eat. I hit the internet, and a number of [Forks Over Knives recipes](#) popped up. Then I noticed [Forks Meal Planner](#) and thought that would be a great place for us to begin our journey.

A Little Bit of Structure

Using a whole-food, plant-based meal planner made the transition much less daunting and showed me the ropes of this cooking style. I went to culinary school years ago just for kicks, and I thought there was very little left for me to learn about making meals, but I was wrong: I don't think I'd ever prepared a dish without first pouring several glugs of oil into the pan or pot.

Before, I was making multiple dishes for each mealtime, and we ordered takeout more than once a week so that I could recover. Now, we regularly eat the same dishes, which feels like a miracle. Finding creative ways to use fresh produce has been pleasurable, and I continue to educate myself, along with watching a fun lineup of vegan chefs on YouTube and TikTok.

Stronger Than Ever

Since making the switch to WFPB, my nails have grown stronger and my mind has grown sharper. I was diagnosed with high blood pressure many years prior and prescribed three medications to keep it in check; I am proud to say that my doctor has taken me off of two of those medications. Now my pill box doesn't rattle like a container of Tic Tacs. At 48, I find myself healthier and stronger than ever.

This chapter of my life has been marked with many successes (and not the career kind, which I used to think were the *only* kind). Each change I made gave me the will and confidence to make the next change. Quitting alcohol made exercise seem possible. Running daily made going to the gym easier. All the physical fitness forced me to get rid of clothes that no longer fit my new

body, so I got to choose a new way to dress. I decided to take my boys hiking, grow my hair long, set up a morning routine to drop everything and hug my wife as soon as I saw her.

If I have a regret (and I really don't), it would be that I didn't make these changes sooner.

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](#).