



I Resolved a Decade of Rheumatoid Arthritis Pain Within Months on a Plant-Based Diet

By Andrea Kane
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November 2010 was when my life began to change. I was 37 years old, and had just opened my own massage therapy studio, when I began experiencing mysterious aches and pains. I would wake up to find one of my arms felt completely numb. One day, in the middle of treating a client, my knees swelled up and the pain became so excruciating that I had to end the massage, blaming it on a migraine. I had no idea what was going on.

A month later I was diagnosed with [rheumatoid arthritis \(RA\)](#). I had to close my newly opened business for a month and contemplate my future. I remember that time period distinctly: I was in so much pain that I barely left the couch, where I sat eating pizza and burritos.

A Decade of Declining Health

Over the next 10 years, I was prescribed varying levels of prednisone, etanercept, and other medications to help manage my RA. I spent a lot of time researching the causes and contributing factors behind the disease. Gradually, I became more and more certain that my diet was playing a big role in my symptoms. Yet I was so addicted to salt, sugar, and [highly processed foods](#) that I just couldn't break the cycle.

Despite the intense pain of RA, as a massage therapist I knew how important it was for me to keep moving to maintain mobility and muscle mass. So I started getting training in other modalities such as [yoga](#), Pilates, and functional movement. In 2018, I signed up with a

business coach, who helped me reflect on my personal decision-making. I began to understand how easy it is to tell yourself the same things and do the same things over and over, believing you'll eventually see different results. I was 46, in pain, and tired—and so terribly, terribly tired of being in pain and tired. Weighing 195 pounds at 4'11", I knew that my weight wasn't helping my condition. I was ready to make a change.

My Transition to a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet

In February 2020 I watched the [Forks Over Knives documentary film](#). It was as though all of the information that I'd learned over the previous decade clicked into place. It was time for action, finally. I resolved to go plant-based for a year. I doubted that I could really lose weight after years of taking steroids for RA, but I figured I'd try it and see what happened. If I were truly meant to be this size, changing my diet wouldn't make a difference.

I made the transition gradually. First I stopped eating red meat. Then I stopped eating [salt](#). Next I gave up oil, caffeine, refined sugar, and finally, alcohol.

"Shocked" doesn't begin to cover what I felt in the weeks and months that followed. Each time I stepped onto the scale, the number was lower than the time before. Surprisingly, I wasn't hungry, and as I stuck to the diet, my arthritis pain lessened. To help myself stay on course, I took the [Forks Over Knives cooking course](#) and learned how to prepare healthy meals for myself. Within seven months, I'd lost 57 pounds, reaching my current weight of 138 pounds by November 2020.

Since undergoing my own health transformation, I've been dedicated to helping others along on their journeys, as well I've created an online Pilates program focused on functional movement and geared toward people over 40 and those with autoimmune conditions. I've also begun mentoring and coaching other over-40 people who want to transition to a plant-based lifestyle. This way of eating has changed my life and given me a new purpose.

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My Tips for Staying Fit After 40

Through my personal wellness journey and decades working in the fitness world, I've come to believe that staying active in middle age and beyond has little to do with going to the gym.

1. **Imagine the Future.** When you choose to change your lifestyle, look to the future. Create a new vision toward which you can aspire, rather than looking back and fretting over how things may have gone off track in the past.
2. **Move Intentionally.** Figure out which activity you actually enjoy enough to do daily, whether it's a walk, a hike, a bike ride, weights, Pilates, or yoga. It doesn't matter if it's 10 minutes or an hour; just dedicate some time to moving your body each day.
3. **Don't Overcomplicate Eating.** No matter how you choose to move your body each day, grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, and water will sustain you. Reduce or remove processed foods, meat, and dairy from your diet, and you'll have all the energy you need.