



Facing Prediabetes, I Ditched Fast Food for Plant Foods

By Brad Washington
June 14 2022

I used to live off highly processed snacks and fast food, often eating entire pizzas and boxes of fried chicken. You name any fast-food chain, and I can tell you exactly what my go-to order was. As much as I loved eating that stuff, I didn't love how I felt afterward. Every night, I tossed and turned, suffering from night sweats, unable to [sleep](#).

At a January 2014 doctor's visit, I stepped on the scale to find out that I weighed 292 pounds. On top of that, blood work showed that I was at risk for [diabetes](#). After hearing that, I went on a calorie-restrictive diet and managed to lose weight for a little while—but after a few months, I succumbed to my old junk-food vices and gained back half the weight I'd lost.

Laying the Groundwork

In 2015, I realized that I could no longer cheat myself out of a healthy life. I recommitted to trying to get better. I was going to do whatever it took, from taking up a fitness routine to changing my diet. This time I focused on eating better instead of eating less. I ate more fruits and vegetables and cut back on fast food. I paid closer attention to [nutrition labels](#). (I was shocked by how much added sugar was in the processed foods I'd been eating!) My new approach worked. Within a few months, I'd lost around 25 pounds. By the end of the year, I'd lost another 25, and by 2017, my weight sat steadily around 200 pounds.

I felt good about my weight, but I found that there was still some room for improvement in my athletic performance and recovery times. So, my friend Mark and I decided to go in on a month-long challenge to go vegan.

At first, I mostly ate vegan mock meats. I still felt sluggish, so I started eating more whole plant foods instead. Quickly, I noticed how much more energy I had, and how much better my recovery was. I decided to continue with the diet. I discovered the Forks Over Knives website, which armed me with more information and helped me stay the course.

3 Years Later, Fitter Than Ever

I've been eating this way for more than three years now. My A1C (a measure of average blood sugar) is in the healthy range, and I've shed some additional weight (about 25 pounds). Today my workouts energize me, and I find that I recover quickly. I'm able to clock 120-mile months in training and actively cross-train to build strength. Last year, I ran my first half marathon and came in first place in my age group. My goal is to feel good, and this way of eating has been great for that.

Sometimes friends will tease me about not eating meat. But once they see my racing times and workout schedule, they change their tunes.

One of my go-to meals lately is [quinoa](#) with mushrooms, peppers, and peas. Instead of junk food, I snack on bananas, apples, and oranges. The biggest surprise for me has been the volume of food I'm able to eat without gaining weight. I never need to count calories on this diet.

My friend Mark stuck with this way of eating, as well, and as African-American men, we've made it our mission to help raise awareness among our friends and fellow people of color the importance of nutrition and eating whole plant foods. This way of eating changed my life, and I want to help change the world's view of nutrition, as well.

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](#).