



# On a Healthy Plant-Based Diet, I've Reversed Type 2 Diabetes and Sky-High Cholesterol

By Lauri Perrella  
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Before going whole-food, plant-based (WFPB), I ate a standard American diet—lots of processed breads, pasta, pizza, and salads with fat-laden dressings. I was excessively drawn to cheese in particular. I nibbled on snacks all day long, and never felt nutritionally satisfied. In an attempt to lose weight, I'd tried lots of different diets over the years, but nothing worked.

About two years ago, I happened upon the WFPB lifestyle while searching for information to help my 82-year-old mother with her neuropathy. I came across the [documentary Forks Over Knives](#), which prompted me to dig deeper. I watched *The Game Changers*, *What the Health*, and *Cowspiracy*, and I bought whole-food, plant-based cookbooks, as well as books written by plant-based doctors. I took volumes of notes.

One of the books I read was *Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease* by Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., MD. It took me back to my childhood. When I was 6, my dad had his first heart attack. He was just 29 years old. In 1986, he had his second one. While he was recovering in the cardiovascular intensive care unit, I stayed overnight at the hospital. I remember a nurse called my room in the middle of the night to tell me that my dad was in cardiac arrest; I ran through the long halls of the hospital, and when I finally got to my dad's room, I witnessed the respiratory care team putting him on a ventilator. He died a week later. He'd just turned 50.

Decades later, as I read Dr. Esselstyn's book, I cried, wishing my dad could have had access to this life-saving information. And though I'd set out to research all this for my mom's sake, it resonated with me on another level: I knew it was time for me to change my own diet, too.

## Facing the Music

I hadn't been to the doctor in years; I was afraid of stepping on the scale or learning what my lab results might indicate. But in March 2021, with some nudging from my husband, I made an appointment for a physical exam.

At the doctor's office, I sheepishly stepped onto the scale and found that I weighed 212 pounds. Then the nurse took my blood pressure, which turned out to be high. My doctor ordered my labs. I told him that starting the next morning, I was going to leave the standard American diet and move to a whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) lifestyle, free of refined sugar, oil, and added salt (aka "SOS-free"). My doctor supported my decision.

My bloodwork came back, and as expected, my lab results were concerning. My [total cholesterol](#) level was 282, my LDL was 189, and my triglycerides were 205. On top of this, my A1C was 6.5, indicating Type 2 diabetes.

The way I looked at it, I was my own perfect test subject as I embarked on my new lifestyle. I bought a monthly planner for [meal planning](#) and grocery shopping, a new scale, and a new blood pressure cuff. I was empowered by all of the reading and studying that I'd done, and I was very excited to put what I had learned into practice. Would it work?

The hardest part for me was not having a mentor in my life who was following a WFPB lifestyle, someone who could help me with my questions. I had to figure this all out on my own, for the most part. But I am forever grateful to the authors of the numerous books and cookbooks and documentaries that helped me to understand.

I monitored my blood pressure and weight, and I documented everything in my monthly planner. I continued this every week, being 100% compliant to a plant-exclusive, SOS-free diet.

(continued)

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## Bringing Mom Along

Two months into my new lifestyle, my mother came down with COVID-19 pneumonia and was admitted to intensive care. I told her we'd be ready to come pick her up as soon as she was better. Meanwhile, I busied myself making plant-based meals to stash in her freezer. I bought her all the same cookbooks that I'd bought for myself. I stocked her pantry with [plant-based staples](#). Finally, five long days later, my mom was discharged from the hospital. She had her first whole-food, plant-based meal and loved it! She told me how much her body craved healthy food like this while she was in the hospital.

## In 18 Months, a World of Difference

March 26, 2023, will be my second anniversary with the WFPB lifestyle. I've completely normalized my cholesterol and triglyceride levels. I have reversed my Type 2 diabetes; my A1C is now 5.4. My blood pressure is excellent. As a nice side benefit, I've lost 80 pounds and have a healthy BMI.

Mom is now plant-based, too, and so is her devoted husband, who is 80 years old. Being able to help them both improve their health is a very good feeling. We enjoy sharing [plant-based recipes](#), [cooking techniques](#), and delicious meals.

This has seriously been the easiest lifestyle change that I have ever made. I feel so healthy, and I feel empowered knowing I'm doing all I can to protect myself from the No. 1 cause of death in women: heart disease.

*To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#). For meal-planning support, check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.*