



On a WFPB Diet, I've Overcome a Lifetime of Health Issues

By Jennifer Diamond
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Growing up with divorced parents who were often locked in court battles, my earliest childhood memories were stressful and tumultuous, and these mental and emotional difficulties were compounded by struggles with my physical health. My battle with [inflammation](#) began at age 4; by age 5, I was regularly receiving allergy shots, which I continued to receive, off and on, for more than 40 years.

Over the decades, I was diagnosed with a slew of other health issues: hormonal skin problems; multiple growths and tumors, including an ovarian cyst that almost resulted in the removal of my ovaries, a nodule on my thyroid gland, and a cyst in my breast; Hashimoto's disease; a herniated disk in my spine; and more.

I was also plagued with persistent sinus infections, and a menu of antibiotics became a monthly routine. In 1997, I underwent my first of three sinus surgeries. Seeking a holistic approach to my health, I consulted a naturopath, but I ended up in the emergency room with heart palpitations due to low potassium.

Despite all these setbacks, I never gave up on pursuing optimal health. I learned the area where I grew up in California was once home to the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, a site used for federal studies involving radioactive and nuclear energy, and where toxic contaminants infiltrated the soil and water table. Tragically, many of my friends succumbed to various forms of cancer, prompting me to wonder if my own health challenges were related to my exposure there.

In 2010, I relocated to Arizona with my husband and children. Even in the dry desert climate, my allergies persisted. I sought help from a new otolaryngology surgeon, which led to my third sinus surgery. During my preoperative scans, a small growth was detected on my pituitary gland that would eventually require surgery.

Searching for Answers

I began scouring the internet, watching and reading everything I could find about the connection between food and health. I [watched the Forks Over Knives documentary film](#), which opened my eyes to the world of whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) nutrition and propelled me to seek out the expertise of Caldwell J. Esselstyn Jr., M.D., and his family; [Chef AJ](#); John A. McDougall, M.D.; and more. The more I looked, the more I found. I watched other documentaries, including *Food, Inc.*; *What the Health*; and *Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead*. I read books such as *The China Study* and *Whole* by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D., and *How Not to Die* by Michael Greger, M.D. I became convinced that WFPB was the optimal diet for health, and I strived to follow this lifestyle.

However, I struggled to stick to this way of eating, particularly when dining with other people. I, myself, was still learning about food and health, and I didn't know how to explain this "radical" idea of a diet focused on fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains. I couldn't stay on course.

Serious Setbacks Spur Lasting Change

My pituitary tumor surgery was a success, but it came with complications, including a spinal fluid leak. Then, in 2021, I developed sensory and neurological issues which left me virtually bedridden for 14 months. Dozens of doctors and specialists later, I was diagnosed with small fiber neuropathy, which came with the bleak prognosis that it would worsen over time and require medication for the rest of my life.

After facing a period of deep despair, seeking guidance

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from more specialists and physicians, I decided to again try a WFPB lifestyle to take back some control of my health. My initial goal was just to [improve my cholesterol](#), as my bloodwork had shown elevated total cholesterol (ranging from 230 to 235) and triglycerides (around 155). I had no idea what an impact going WFPB would have on my entire life.

Within a few weeks of going WFPB, my mobility began to return, and the uncomfortable neuropathy sensations gradually began to fade. With these first real signs of improvement, I embarked on a journey of healing, tapping into the support and knowledge of the WFPB community.

Hoping to give my body the space that it needed to heal, I traveled back to California and completed a 14-day water and juice fast at TrueNorth Health Center. This proved to be a life-changing experience, as it helped to accelerate my healing journey.

My WFPB Transformation

It's been over a year, and my WFPB, gluten-free, SOFAS-free (no added sugar, oil, flour, alcohol, or salt) lifestyle has had profound impacts on my health. While my neuropathy is not completely healed, I'm now without any neuropathic sensations 99% of the time. I am cured of sinus issues. My cysts and growths have disappeared. Numbness in my toe has all but vanished. For the first time in more than 30 years, my hypothyroidism medication has been reduced. Per recent bloodwork, my total cholesterol is 170, and my triglycerides are 102—all within the healthy range. And while weight loss was never a goal, over the last year I've lost 37 pounds.

I am still working to reverse osteoporosis and resolve Hashimoto's and hypothyroid autoimmune symptoms. I am convinced the answers to better health are found in the foods we eat. I'm very aware that, in order to keep inflammation away, I must always stay the course with my WFPB lifestyle.

And there are so many wonderful WFPB foods to choose from. I enjoy simple steamed broccoli, baked potatoes of all kinds, colorful rainbow salads topped with homemade dressing or a squeeze of lemon, [veggie sushi](#) with quinoa and tofu, and baked stuffed mushrooms with creamy spinach sauce. For a sweet fix, I love [fresh papaya](#) and berries, or nice cream made

from frozen bananas topped with baked pears and cherries, dusted in cinnamon. My favorite snacks include apples and walnuts, sugar snap peas with homemade [oil-free hummus](#), and fresh fruits.

I have started a YouTube channel and I'm currently becoming certified in plant-based nutrition coaching, as a way to share my knowledge with others, with the hope of helping people heal from conditions they suffer from and lead happier, healthier lives.

My health journey is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, the transformative power of food, and the remarkable impact of a supportive community. Life, to me, is no longer about mere survival but about healing, thriving, and savoring every precious moment.

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.