



I Said Goodbye to Animal Products—and Acid Reflux, High Blood Pressure, and Debilitating Arthritis Pain

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I'm from the South, and I grew up on foods like fried chicken, instant mashed potatoes, white rice, and pork. By the time I was a teenager, I was carrying extra weight, and I was diagnosed with scoliosis.

As an adult, I continued eating the same way. On top of being overweight, I started experiencing joint pain and gastrointestinal issues. In my 20s I was diagnosed with lupus, Sjögren's syndrome, [osteoarthritis](#), [acid reflux](#), and fibromyalgia. I struggled with constipation for weeks on end. I took medications, but nothing helped. At 25 years old, my health issues forced me to drop out of school and stop working.

In 2018, I had such intense joint pain that I had trouble lifting my newborn son, despite getting regular injections in my shoulders, knees, and ankles to manage the osteoarthritis. I also had anxiety and extremely [high blood pressure](#).

Ready for Change: Ditching Animal Products, Going WFPB

I felt that if I wanted to live much longer, I desperately needed to change. I knew that cutting out meat and junk food and switching to a [whole-food, plant-based \(WFPB\) diet](#) would be good for me, so I started slowly moving in that direction, first cutting out pork and highly processed foods, then beef, then chicken and turkey. I started losing weight, and by the end of 2019, I was

down about 80 pounds.

In summer 2023, I cut out salmon (the only animal product I was still eating) and oil and went fully WFPB, with support and inspiration from several plant-based groups I joined on Facebook. Seeing testimonials from other people who transformed their health on a WFPB diet gave me the motivation I needed.

More Energy Than Ever

Today I love eating leafy greens, [sweet potatoes](#), fresh herbs, and all sorts of veggies, fruits, and whole grains, and I've lost about 10 more pounds. I feel more energized than ever, and I'm able to manage my chronic pain well enough that I can work out and do yoga. I still have osteoarthritis, but I bounce back from flare-ups more quickly, and I don't need injections.

I no longer experience acid reflux or constipation. My blood pressure and cholesterol levels are all within the healthy range. I used to go to the doctor weekly; as of this writing, I've only been to the doctor one time in the past year, and that was just for my yearly checkup. Since adopting this lifestyle, I'm doing so much better mentally, physically, and spiritually.

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.