



# How I Got Rid of 100 Pounds, My Chronic Pain, and Helped My Whole Family Get Healthier

By Nalida Besson  
December 17 2015

About 2½ years ago, when I found myself in excruciating, chronic pain, I couldn't lie to myself any longer about my health and weight. With a BMI of 36.7, I was not just overweight but troublingly obese (a BMI of 30 or more is considered obese). I read Dr. Fuhrman's *Eat to Live* and made the commitment to better health. I had been a "junk food vegetarian" for years, so I threw out all the junk in my house and went on a whole-food, plant-based diet.

## My Journey to Better Health

Immediately after cutting out the junk, the oil, and the dairy products, I started losing weight. But sugar was my biggest addiction, and one bite was never enough. Before I quit for good in December of 2013, I lied to myself about moderation. I wouldn't even read the full text of Dr Fuhrman's emailed newsletters, and I certainly didn't want to watch his videos telling me the truth about my sugary, maple-syrupy vegan desserts. But I was having more frequent gallbladder attacks, and on some level I knew those desserts were killing me. Cutting out oil had helped, but having sugar really activated those gallstones.

I finally read those emails and watched those short videos, prayed for strength, and vowed to stop killing myself with sugar. I cut out added sugar on December 27, 2013. Then, in January of 2015, I let go of added salt with Chef AJ's help. Her *Unprocessed* DVDs have great cooking demos, and her book *Unprocessed* has delicious recipes! My husband can't believe that our entire Haitian family (including three young children) has adapted without the added salt, sugar, and oil.

On August 17, 2015, I reached my initial goal of losing 100 pounds!!!! In a little less than 25 months, I went from a size 22/24 to a size 4/6. I feel wonderful and no longer have the health problems that I did before. I also started taking care of my mental and emotional self and tracking my exercise on an app called Lose It.



## My Family Is Healthier Now, Too

I am so happy that my whole family is on this health journey with me. Because all three children are legally blind due to inherited congenital cataracts, we have relied a lot on audio/visual information to help us transition from a junk food vegetarian diet to a whole-food, plant-based sugar-oil-salt free program. As a family, we have watched documentaries such as *Forks Over Knives*, *FOKs Extended Interviews*, and Rip Esselstyn's *Engine 2 Kitchen Rescue* several times for information and encouragement. Even our eight-year-old son (who has always been slim) has watched them multiple times and asks a lot of questions. My husband has been slowly losing weight and feeling better. Our children were not considered overweight, but our two daughters, who have polycystic ovary syndrome, have improved tremendously. This past spring, all three kids saw the pediatrician, who remarked how well they were doing and how she didn't have to see them all fall or winter for sick visits!

At home I keep it simple, and we enjoy everything we eat, which includes a lot of veggies, fruits, sweet potatoes, red or yellow potatoes, beans, and whole grains, including brown and wild rice. A favorite family meal is bean and vegetable soup with unsalted tomato paste and salt-free seasonings and herbs.

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I am so grateful to God for the chance to reclaim my health and to heal the body he gave me, which I had so abused with food, stress, and lack of exercise.