



From Rock Bottom With Ulcerative Colitis to Pain-Free in One Year on a Plant-Based Diet

By Tara Latham
March 16 2016

Rock Bottom: 2013

I can safely say that 2013 was the worst year of my life. At the beginning of the year, pregnant with twin girls, I was put on strict bed rest for extreme symptoms of ulcerative colitis (UC). My doctors were monitoring my UC and high-risk pregnancy closely, and had put me on a high daily dose of prednisone, an oral steroid commonly prescribed for UC. But the medication was mostly ineffective, and in early February, my husband, Andrew, and I lost our twins at 32 weeks due to complications.

We were floored, both by the stress of bed rest and the subsequent worst possible outcome. Even though it was determined that my symptoms were not causal to our loss, our questions began. What had we done wrong? Had the high doses of steroids I had been prescribed for my UC symptoms played some role? If my body had been healthier, could I have brought our twins safely to term?

The remainder of the year was a blur of UC flares treated with different drug regimens. Ultimately, my body gave in, and I landed in hospital days before Christmas. Everything I ate ran right through me in the most painful way possible, and I had lost 40 pounds. During my “holiday” in the hospital, I worked with my doctors on suggested new drug regimens, but spent half my time online researching nutrition and holistic ways to fight my disease.

Figuring It All Out: 2014

One of the first resources I found was *Forks Over Knives*. Although the film did not specifically speak to ulcerative colitis, it referenced many chronic “Western diseases,” why these diseases are more prevalent in areas where meat and processed food consumption is high, and how a whole-food plant-based diet could change the course of the current health crisis plaguing our society.

I wanted to know more. How could changing our diet potentially help mitigate my ongoing battle with UC, and put Andrew, our four-year-old daughter, and myself in

prevention mode for some of the most common diseases of our time? Once we started to dive into the research, it was almost too easy to be motivated to make a big life change.

Motivated by Plants: 2015

On New Year’s Day 2015, we embraced a whole-food plant-based lifestyle, and it was clear there was no turning back. I quickly realized that I had not felt “healthy” in a very long time. Even when my UC symptoms were “in remission,” each day, I felt tenderness and bloating in my belly by mid-afternoon and a lethargy that seemed unaffected by my diet choices. I was also told my body would likely not be healthy enough to have any more children, which was heartbreaking after the loss we had experienced the previous year.

When we switched to a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle low in sugar and processed grains, all my bloating and pain disappeared. And miraculously, last April my doctors told me my labs showed incredible improvement and that I was healthy enough to try for another baby. I became pregnant shortly after, and we had a healthy, hefty baby boy in January!

Our New Way of Life

I won’t say it has been a complete breeze. We’ve had a few false starts and hiccups—“What!? These veggie burgers aren’t vegan?” But all in all, it has been easier than we anticipated, even for my burger-loving husband and my mac-and-cheese-guzzling toddler. We are all happy and hardy with our new food choices. We feel energized, fueled, and motivated to exercise regularly and passionately attend to all the responsibilities of daily life. Most important, we love the food we create together as a family, and the genuine feeling of reward from the meals we share together every day.

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