



My Family With 6 Kids: How We Regained Our Health and Lost 115 Pounds

By Yvonne Jones
June 26 2017

In November 2015, my husband and I decided to start homeschooling our six children, aged 8 to 16. Our transformation began with the tough decision to pull our kids from the public school system. We thought our kids deserved better than what they were getting, so the week before Thanksgiving we made the switch.

While we were organizing and finalizing our curriculum, we had the kids focus on watching educational documentaries. They were excited to do some TV schooling and watched “Racing Extinction,” “Forks Over Knives,” “Food, Inc.” and “Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead.” But it was “Forks Over Knives” that put us on the path of eating and feeling better. It truly was an eye-opener.

We wanted to give a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle a chance, but we knew that we needed to do it as a family for it to work. We had thought we ate healthier than most families, so there was no “junk food” in the house, like cookies, candy, sugary cereals, or soda. Still, making the switch to a full-on plant-based diet was a tall order.



Refrigerator Rehab

As a family, we started our new life on New Year’s Eve 2015. I went through our pantry and refrigerator and got rid of everything that did not fit a WFPB lifestyle. Gone were animal products and foods with oils or refined sugars, as well as items with ingredients we couldn’t pronounce. Needless to say, I realized just how badly we *had* actually been eating. After cleaning everything out, we made a list of ingredients from recipes we found in the *Forks Over Knives* book and went shopping. It took us over four hours to shop, searching for healthy breads, whole grains, noodles, spices, and everything else.

It would take many months for me to not automatically go to the yogurt, chicken, or the canned food aisle. Over time, I learned which pasta was good, discovered nutritional yeast (one of my favorites), and realized that no matter how tired I am, food is best made at home instead of being picked up quickly at the pizza place.

During this whole process, we bonded and gained so much more as a family than we ever expected. Cooking became a part of our homeschooling in learning measurements, using ratios to adapt recipes, and finding substitute ingredients to make our old

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favorite recipes healthy. Our kids gained an appreciation for cooking, and three of them have become quite adept in the kitchen. Among our favorite meals are fettuccini, potato enchiladas, roasted veggies, barbecue potatoes over salad, and bean burgers.

I found this lifestyle shift to be a surprisingly easy transition. The idea that we could still have pasta and desserts made this decision a "no brainer" for us. There have been a few rough times of cravings, but we got through them by supporting each other and remembering that this was not a "diet," but a healthy lifestyle we chose as a family to pursue.



Gone: Allergies, Asthma, and 115 Pounds of Unwanted Weight

After having terrible seasonal allergies for about 20 years, my husband's first WFPB spring brought him zero allergy symptoms. Similarly, my eldest son has suffered both allergy- and viral-induced asthma and also had pneumonia for five consecutive winters prior to changing our diet. By the spring of 2016, he had absolutely no seasonal allergy symptoms whatsoever! In June 2016 he stopped all his asthma medication under the supervision of his doctor, and he has not needed his medication or inhalers since.

The benefits of a plant-based diet didn't stop there. Many of us needed to drop some unhealthy weight, and we did just that. My husband lost 65 pounds, I lost 15 pounds, my oldest daughter lost 20 pounds, and my two oldest sons lost 15 pounds combined. As a family, we dropped about 115 pounds! And the funny thing is, we didn't start down this path to lose weight, but just to get healthy.



Independent Thinkers ... and Eaters

One of the hardest parts of this whole process has been dealing with people's reactions when we tell them our family has gone

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completely WFPB. We always get questions like, “How do the kids get their protein?” or “Don’t they need to drink their milk?” and “What do you eat?” The majority of people think we’re nuts.

Luckily, we raised our children to be independent thinkers and to always do what's right. Our hope is that others will open up their minds to this lifestyle. If we could do it, anyone could.