



# I Went Plant-Based and Conquered My Cystic Acne

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*For years, Kiernan battled cystic acne, attempting to keep breakouts at bay with medication and topical treatments. Nothing made a difference—until she changed her diet.*

My family has always been fairly health conscious. My mom and dad worked out and tried to teach us to eat healthy, at least most of the time. A lot of our meals consisted of meat and veggies, as my dad has a gluten intolerance. I have three younger brothers, and our parents were always pushing us to eat more [protein](#). I ate a lot of meat, cheese, butter, and eggs, often in low-carb wraps or by themselves.

## Painful Breakouts

When I was 16, my skin started breaking out. My mom and my grandma had both dealt with [cystic acne](#) in their teens, but theirs hadn't appeared as quickly or caused as much damage. As the years went by, my skin refused to improve. My parents and I tried everything from benzoyl peroxide face washes to chemical peels, none of which helped for more than a month.

It wasn't until I was 19 that I started taking antibiotics. Antibiotics were the first thing to help from the inside out. That was my lightbulb moment: I realized that something internal was causing the cysts to form.

Eventually, though, the antibiotics stopped making a difference. I tried probiotics, but they stopped helping after a while, too. In June 2017, my skin was still breaking out. I had deep, pitted scars and large, painful cysts that were difficult to cover even with the best makeup. Finally, I'd run out of options.

## A Taste of Change

That next month I started a "cleanse," something I'd done before but never to this extreme. I cut out all dairy, gluten, sugar, and fast food. During this time, I told my mom how expensive the cleanse was, and she suggested a meal plan that was completely plant based and cost under \$25 a week. I had nothing to lose, so I tried it. I noticed that my skin improved slightly during the part of the cleanse when I wasn't eating animal products. That was my first introduction to vegan eating.

But after that month-long cleanse, I went back to eating

the way I had before, and my acne flared up again. By November, I was at my wits' end. I needed a long-term solution. I had always joked about going vegan as a last-ditch effort. Finally, in desperation, I went vegan two weeks before Thanksgiving.

## Clear Results

Sticking to a vegan diet was rough at first, and I definitely cheated over the holidays. I missed pizza so much I would have given my left pinky toe for a slice—but by the New Year my skin was looking better than it had in a long time. It took a couple months, but the cysts cleared up. I've been plant-based ever since, and I haven't had a flare-up of cystic acne in over four months. My skin is clearer; my energy is higher; and, for the first time since puberty, I've been able to keep a stable, healthy weight. I've started weight training, which has increased my energy even more. I've been able to encourage my friends and family to eat more plant-based meals and to try [different vegan foods](#). I even made a fully raw pineapple cake for my family over Christmas. It's been nine months since I started this vegan journey, and I don't plan on ever going back!

*Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.*