



What Giving Up Meat, Dairy, and Processed Foods Did for My BMI, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol

By Brittany Jaroudi
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Brittany Jaroudi was struggling with high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and obesity at only 25 years old. Then she saw Forks Over Knives and turned things around in a big way.

Growing up, I was always fearful that my parents would die. I had to witness my mother go through cancer three different times, and my father had a massive heart attack that led to triple bypass surgery and, eventually, stents and a defibrillator. My dad now has diabetes and congestive heart failure. These days, I help take my dad to eye injection appointments and my mother to chemo. It has been a rough time seeing my family so sick.

Raised on the Standard American Diet

Through my childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, I followed the same lifestyle as my parents, eating a standard American diet. We ate take-out and lots of meat, dairy, and oil.

My struggles with weight began when I was only 8 years old, and by the time I was in my mid-20s, my eating habits had really caught up with me. I was 185 pounds! With my being only 5 feet tall, my BMI was clearly in the obese range.

My doctor diagnosed me with high blood pressure (150/90) and put me on two different blood pressure medications. I had high cholesterol (total cholesterol: 242). My anxiety was through the roof, with a resting heart rate in the 90s. My hs-CRP (high-sensitivity C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation and cardiovascular disease risk) was extremely high, and I had chest pains. I thought, “This can’t be my life at 25 years old.”

From Rock Bottom to Record Highs

I began researching ways to get myself out of the health crisis. I found the *Forks Over Knives* documentary and it all clicked. I saw what my future would be if I stayed on my current path: heart disease, autoimmune disease, diabetes, and maybe even cancer. After watching the documentary I immediately went plant-based. I got rid of all the dairy, meat, and processed foods we had in our house. I went shopping for whole plant foods: grains,

fruit, veggies, and legumes.

Since that day three years ago, I have lost 60 pounds; I no longer have high cholesterol (150 total); I no longer have high blood pressure (110/70); my resting heart rate is 60; and my hs-CRP is in the normal range! I can’t say enough about how amazing I feel and how grateful I am to have found this lifestyle at an early age.

I credit *Forks Over Knives* for changing my life and truly saving it. This new lifestyle has given me more than I could have ever dreamed of. I currently help run a whole-food, plant-based Meetup group in my community. My life’s passion now is to educate others about going whole-food, plant-based and to save as many people as possible from lifestyle diseases.

It is never too late—or too early—to become healthy with plant foods. I look forward to a lifetime of eating whole-food, plant-based and helping others.

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.