



How a Vegan Diet Impacts Diabetes

By Courtney Davison
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More than 370 million people around the world suffer from diabetes, and about 100 million Americans have diabetes or are likely to get it. Being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, or prediabetes is a life-changing experience, but we have some good news.

Research shows that moving to a whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) diet can reduce the symptoms of type 1 diabetes and can help manage and even reverse type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. Cutting out fat-laden animal products and highly processed foods can also dramatically reduce your risk of developing diabetes in the first place.

Let's dig into the research.

A Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet Can Reduce Type 2 Diabetes Risk by a Third

In 2016, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health [released a study](#) that shows the healthiest plant-based diets can lower the [risk of type 2 diabetes by around a third](#). Just switching out animal products for delicious plant-based alternatives can lower your risk by 20 percent. A whole-food, plant-based diet is rich in beneficial dietary fiber, antioxidants, and micronutrients, and low in saturated fat. This is excellent for overall health outcomes, whether they're related to diabetes or not.

A Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet Can Help Manage or Reverse Type 2 Diabetes

A 2018 report published in [BMJ Open Diabetes Research & Care](#) found that "plant-based diets were associated with significant improvement in emotional well-being, physical well-being, depression ... general health, HbA1c levels, weight, total cholesterol, and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, compared with several diabetic associations' official guidelines." They also found that plant-based diets showed potential to improve

diabetic neuropathic pain and triglyceride levels in type 2 diabetes patients.

WFPB diets [can even reverse type 2 diabetes](#) by resolving the root cause: insulin resistance.

Essentially, WFPB nutrition can help to manage the symptoms of type 1 diabetes and could halt or reverse prediabetes and type 2 diabetes.

A Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet Can Reduce Problems Associated with Type 1 Diabetes

Eliminating animal products and moving to a diet rich in whole and minimally processed plant foods can significantly reduce the problems created by type 1 and type 1.5 autoimmune diabetes. Although there's no cure for this type of diabetes, the right diet has plenty of benefits. [Cyrus Khambatta, PhD, writes that](#) following a low-fat, WFPB lifestyle can:

- Boost insulin sensitivity and reduce insulin use by more than 40 percent after six months.
- Lead to more predictable blood glucose, making it easier to manage diabetes.
- Increase blood flow to tissues in the body and reduce the likelihood of diabetes-related nerve damage.
- Reduce the burden on the kidneys, decreasing the chances of getting kidney disease.

Additionally, a WFPB diet can increase your energy levels and help you lose weight, and you get to indulge in delicious comfort foods!

Real-Life Success Stories: People with Diabetes See Significant Health Improvements on a WFPB Diet

[Real-life case studies](#) support the notion that eliminating animal products and following a healthy, whole food diet can make it easier to live with diabetes.

(continued)

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Ken Thomas Has Managed Type 1 Diabetes for 30 Years

“I am grateful to Forks Over Knives for filling the gaps between experience and science. And I am grateful for the gifts my diabetes has provided me. At age 62 I am stronger yet lighter, and I have more energy and stamina than I did at 50, 40, or even 30! I see no sign that my vitality is peaking, and I no longer have any idea where 'middle age' is. What a profound difference from my original prognosis a quarter century ago.” — *Ken Thomas*

Marc Ramirez Reversed His Type 2 Diabetes

“I now follow three basic guidelines: I eat no animal products, I eat low-fat foods, and I avoid high-glycemic foods. I enjoy meals like oatmeal with cinnamon and raisins, pasta primavera, bean burritos, veggie subs, veggie burgers, and plenty of fruits and vegetables such as strawberries and sweet potatoes.” — *Marc Ramirez*

You can find more success stories by people who have used a WFPB diet to manage, halt, and even reverse diabetes:

- [My Patient Didn't Just Control His Diabetes, He Cured It!](#)
- [I'm the Brooklyn Borough President, and I Reversed My Diabetes with a Plant-Based Diet](#)
- [How this “Junk Food Vegan” Reversed Type 2 Diabetes After Over 20 Years of Battling the Disease](#)
- [Goodbye to Type 2 Diabetes, Meds, and a Lifetime of Dieting](#)
- [How My Patient Beat Prediabetes and Won a Decade-Long Weight-Loss Battle](#)

If you have, or are at risk of developing, diabetes, a WFPB diet can be a game-changer. It's easy to make the switch: [Start by reading our Plant-Based Primer](#), and when you're ready, visit the [Forks Over Knives Tools section](#) for support and resources.