



Post-Double Bypass Surgery, I'm Soaring on a Plant-Based Diet

By Dawn Clark
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Dawn was a smoker who loved rich Southern foods. Then chest pains landed her in the ER. After double bypass surgery for [heart disease](#), she decided to try a plant-based diet.

My life has drastically changed since June 1, 2015, the day I finally broke down and went to the ER after months of chest pain. The doctors discovered that my “widowmaker” artery was almost 100 percent blocked. A few weeks before my 52nd birthday, I underwent double bypass surgery.

Surgery went well, and I thought I was on the road to recovery. I was told I'd be fine as long as I quit smoking, stayed on the American Heart Association diet, exercised, and took my medications daily. After six months, however, I'd gained weight and I was lethargic—side effects of the medication. The fatigue was so bad that I found myself falling off the stationary bike at the gym. I asked my cardiologist what I could do to come off the meds. He said I'd have to be on them for the rest of my life.

Another Way

I began researching doctors who helped patients more holistically and found such a cardiologist, Dr. Christopher Stephenson. He introduced me to a [whole-food, plant-based diet](#) and recommended I watch *Forks Over Knives*. On our drive home, my husband, Richard, encouraged me to quit my job to focus on my health.

Since then, I've lost 70 pounds. I'm on no medications. My resting heart rate is 52, and my average blood pressure is 100/68—better than when I was on meds. The diet was hard for this Southern girl at first, but it quickly got easier as the weight started coming off. When my husband witnessed my transformation, he decided to try WFPB, too, and lost 50 pounds. Not only has this lifestyle been wonderful for our health but also it's given us a stronger marriage.

Transformed for Good

When people say that my lifestyle change is extreme, I share Dr. Esselstyn's quote: "Half a million people in this country this year ... will have their heart exposed [and] veins will be taken from their leg and sewn on their heart. Some people would call that extreme."

My life will never be the same—and for that I am beyond thankful. I never imagined it could be this good.

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