

How I Turned My Life Around

Maggie Fitzgerald's Vegan Story

It's been almost 2 years since I began eating a plant-based diet and it has changed my life so much! I would never consider going back to my old diet.

Making the change was actually effortless for me, probably because I was ready. I'd been gaining weight and had reached the level where the BMI chart said I was obese. I knew this extra weight would lead to all sorts of health problems down the road. I'm a Nurse Practitioner and I see people every day that have gone down this road. I had become one of them. I didn't want that to be my story.

I'd also begun to gradually lose my taste for meat. My husband and I ate a lot of meat, but my perceptions were changing and I started thinking of meat as animal flesh and I just didn't want to stick my fork into this flesh and eat it. I'd never cared for dairy products and eggs, so turning away from animal products was easy for me.

About this time, my husband came home one day and said he thought we should start eating more healthfully. Then I saw a notice in the newspaper about a Food for Life class and knew I wanted to take it. That was April, 2009.

I learned so much in the class that I switched to a plant-based diet right away. I began to lose weight immediately. Within 6 months I had lost 45 pounds. I had always been quite active, but the excess weight had made it hard to do some things, like running. With the weight coming off, I was able to become even more active than before, and I love it!

I read some books that reinforced my commitment to a vegan diet. John Robbins' book,

[Diet for a New America](#), helped me understand the more far-reaching effects of my food choices and *[The China Study](#)*, by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D., underscored the health benefits of a plant-based diet. *[Becoming Vegan](#)*, by Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina, filled in the nutritional details of a vegan diet, so I felt confident about my choice.

My husband doesn't cook at all so he is very willing to eat anything I fix. He never complained about the food, but several months into our vegan diet, he told me my cooking was improving! As for me, I enjoy my food much, much more than I did prior to making the switch. I love all the colors that are just natural in plant-foods. The presentation is beautiful and the flavors are delicious.

Besides being lighter physically, I also feel lighter mentally. I sleep better and seem to need less sleep. I have tons of energy and don't go through the blood sugar highs and lows like I used to. I'm more mellow and react less than I did before. Maybe it's because I'm getting older, and maybe it has to do with not ingesting the violence and fear inherent in eating animals.

I have no trouble maintaining my ideal weight now, but I pay much closer attention to it than I used to as I never want to be overweight again. I weigh myself once a week and if it goes up more than a couple of pounds, I make a little adjustment in my diet, e.g. skipping wine with my dinner. I also input everything I eat and all my activities into a great website: livestrong.com, which keeps track of calories in and out.



I knew extra weight would lead to all sorts of health problems down the road... I didn't want that to be my story.

I also feel lighter mentally. I sleep better and I have tons of energy.

I don't go through the blood sugar highs and lows like I used to. I'm more mellow and react less than I did before.

Up to now, I've focused mostly on how this diet has helped me, but I want to begin incorporating it more into my medical practice, especially for those with diabetes.

My commitment to a vegan diet is firm and everyone knows that when they come to my house, they'll get a vegan meal. I'm not tempted to slip back into old ways when it's inconvenient to eat this way, and the only time it was really difficult was when I was traveling in

Europe. We eat out about once a week here and find it is no problem.

I'm grateful to have discovered how to take care of my health and maintain my ideal weight. At 54 years old, I feel great and am excited about my future.

***Note:** Maggie Fitzgerald will be the speaker at our February 26th AVS potluck. Her presentation will be about heart health and a vegan diet.*