

# *This Isn't a Diet--It's Our New Way of Life*

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There are certain days that stick in your mind. For me, one of those will be March 4, 2010. That was the first day of my [Food for Life Diabetes class](#) in Wasilla. That was the day I went vegan.

I knew what I was getting into. My parents had taken the [Cancer Project Food for Life classes](#) a couple of years earlier, had adopted a vegan diet, and it had changed their lives. They, (especially my dad), had been pushing me to follow suit because they knew it would make a huge difference in my health. But you know how it is when your dad is telling you what to do . . . I resisted, even though I knew it was a good idea.

I was only 28 years old but felt bad most of the time. I had headaches every single day. My blood pressure was high and I wouldn't take my meds because they made me sick, and I could feel my blood pounding in my head. I didn't want to have a stroke -- especially not in my 20's with two daughters, ages 5 and 6 and a great, supportive husband. I also had sleep apnea, and knew I needed to lose weight so I could sleep better. I had tried every crazy diet in the world, and finally just threw away my scale. But when

I went to the doctor, I found out I was up to 256 pounds. I couldn't believe it!

Finally, I'd just had enough. I was tired of feeling bad. I was tired of all the meds. I was tired of the headaches. I was tired of being hungry and grumpy and tired all the time. I was ready to change. So I signed up for the Food for Life Diabetes class, knowing that would be the start of eating a totally plant-based diet.

I started seeing and feeling changes right away! I started losing weight, my blood pressure dropped to normal, the pounding in my head stopped, I could sleep without meds, and I wasn't tired all the time. In a few weeks, other people started to notice things, such as my skin looked better and I was more cheerful. Now I have enough energy to walk with my neighbor and to work out, and I'm getting ready to plant my garden.

My husband and kids are eating a vegan diet also. There have been some moments of resistance, such as when I cleaned out the pantry, and gave away all the junk and processed food. But I want everyone in my family to be healthy, so it's important for us all to change our diet. Overall, though, it hasn't really been hard.



In fact, it has been super easy. I love to cook and my daughters and husband are willing to try new things. I usually make about two new things a week and we're having fun choosing new fruits at the grocery store that none of us have eaten before.

I've noticed a real difference in my kids since they started eating this very healthy, plant-based diet. They are more even-

tempered, listen and pay attention better, don't bicker with each other as much, and are sleeping through the night better. And my husband helps me more in the kitchen now, chopping vegetables. We're learning to do this together.

There really hasn't been any downside to this change. I love the food and can eat a lot and still lose weight. I

lost 20 pounds the first 7 weeks, and have now slowed down to about a pound a week. It was very exciting when I was able to buy some new clothes that weren't in the Plus sizes for the first time!

My thinking has changed along with my body. I've started caring about how animals are treated, and I'm now choosing natural cleaning products that are good for the earth. I've been watching documentaries and

reading books that all reinforce the choice I've made to eat a whole-foods, plant-based diet.

Some of my friends and family members haven't understood this change and that has been difficult at times, but I know I'm doing the right thing for me and for my family. This isn't a diet . . . it's our new way of life and I love it!

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