

Finally Free of Pain

Vegan Story: Val Musial

Last January, my doctor scared the bejesus out of me. He said I was “pre-diabetic.” Diabetes runs in my family and I’ve seen the people I love sticking themselves with needles and taking pills. I wanted no part of that! At 83 years old, I’ve got the determination to do what I’ve gotta do, and I would do anything it takes to avoid having diabetes. But what? ? ?

I started asking questions and talking to people about it, including Linda, who was in my Weight Watcher’s group. She told me about a class I HAD to take and she gave me a book to read: ***Dr. Neal Barnard’s Program for Reversing Diabetes.*** She said, “Read this book all the way through from beginning to end before deciding if you’re going to do it.” She also told me it might be too hard for me to do it, at my age. But I followed her advice and read the book from cover to cover. It made a lot of sense, and I thought to myself, “I can do this! Why *can’t* I do it?” So I did!

On April 20, 2010, I started eating a vegan diet. I used the recipes in Dr. Barnard’s book and found them easy to make and they tasted good. No problem! I could do this! Four days later, I attended my first Alaska Vegetarian Society potluck with Linda, my Weight Watcher’s friend, and found out about an upcoming Food for Life Class. This was the class Linda had told me I HAD to take, so I signed up to take it, along with my daughter, Teresa.



I saw my doctor again in May and my glucose level had already dropped. No more pre-diabetes. That’s what I wanted to hear! This vegan diet was working for me, and if it would keep me from getting diabetes, I’d have no trouble staying away from meat.

From the very beginning, I found this diet easier than cooking meat -- no need to remember to take meat out of the freezer in the morning -- and clean-up is so much easier! Then Teresa and I started the Food for Life cooking classes in June and I had a lot of fun and learned a lot more.

Everything was going better than I had actually expected, but then it even got a lot better. After three months on my vegan diet, I was suddenly free of pain for the first time in seven years! You just can’t imagine what that is like.

Seven years ago, I fell down in the shower. I didn’t break anything, but I dislocated my hip and badly bruised and damaged the nerves in my left arm. The chiropractor was able to get my hip back in place within about a

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week, but I had terrible pain in my arm that wouldn’t go away. My doctor gave me pain pills which helped a little, but the pain was never gone. One day the pain was so bad I was actually in tears. My daughter called while I was crying and when she found out what was wrong, she said, “We’re going down to Virginia Mason Clinic in Seattle. We’ve got to do

something about this pain!” We flew down later that day.

After my trip, I had a diagnosis, but was still in pain. The cause of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy isn't known and there is no cure. Treatment involves trying to relieve the symptoms with more drugs. I also learned that if I didn't exercise my arm, I could actually lose the use of it. So I started physical therapy and I continue to exercise my arm every day. It worked. I actually regained some of the strength I had lost. But I was still in constant,

terrible pain.

I'd been living with this pain for 7 years when it suddenly disappeared. This happened 3 months after starting a vegan diet -- and the pain hasn't returned. Life is so much better without that pain. Everything is easier to do.

There is no way I would go back to eating the way I used to. I don't miss meat at all. I do miss the omelets I used to eat every Sunday, but that's a small thing compared to reversing diabetes and finally being free of pain.