

Patty Cates

When I think about my switch to a vegan diet, I am filled with gratitude and joy. I'm grateful to know how to eat in a way that is truly health supporting, and joyful that I feel so great and am having such fun with it! It has truly changed my life.

I began eating a vegan diet on August 5, 2009, after attending my first class in the [Food for Life Nutrition and Cooking Class series](#). I attended the classes with my daughter, and at the end of the first class, she turned to me and said, "I'm going to do it!" I responded, "Me too!"

My decision to eat a plant-based diet came after years of trying different ways of eating. For a time, I even tried the Atkins diet. I wasn't really overweight, but I wanted to weigh less than I did. I didn't feel very well eating that way so I switched to a vegetarian diet for about 8 years. I definitely felt better after that change, but I didn't really have enough nutritional knowledge to choose a healthy vegetarian diet. I ate mostly breads and pasta and very few fruits and veggies.

While I was vegetarian, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, I found it early and was able to take care of

it with just a lumpectomy. I was surprised to get it while eating a vegetarian diet, and then read somewhere that I needed to eat fish to prevent more cancer from occurring. So I began eating fish daily for a couple of years before learning how to eat a healthy vegan diet.

I feel so grateful to have finally learned enough about nutrition to know what my body needs. Instead of focusing on weight, I now just focus on eating a healthy diet and my weight just takes care of itself!

I feel so much better in many ways since switching to a whole-foods, plant-based diet rich in vegetables and fruits. I can think more clearly and have much more energy. Even when I have

a rough day, I can handle it easily. I feel like I can face anything! I sleep much better and find I don't need as much sleep as I used to. I lost seven pounds in the first three weeks, and besides the actual weight loss, I just feel lighter -- more expansive -- inside. I guess I can best describe it as being on a natural high.

I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in my 20's. Over the years, my hands would hurt sporadically and I've noticed lately that they haven't hurt for quite awhile.



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I've also noticed my skin tone is better, and I haven't experienced the skin splitting on my thumbs like it used to in the winter. My digestion is also much better.

I also just love the food! I can eat as much as I want to without gaining weight and without having that heavy, tired feeling afterwards. No more fuzzy-brained "hang-over" the next day after overeating.

My dietary changes have also helped my husband, who has diabetes. He has lost 25 pounds so far and his blood sugars have improved. He hasn't become completely vegan yet, but he is much more conscious

of his food choices. My daughter, who took the class with me, is also benefiting from her vegan diet.

I feel so good about myself now,

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I feel sad for others who are suffering with health problems who haven't yet learned what they could do to help themselves.