

Interview with a nutritarian: Helen

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A year ago this month I received a phone call from my sister informing me that my mom had experienced a stroke and was en-route to the ER via an ambulance. Living five minutes from the hospital I made a mad dash there only to discover my mother intensely suffering in a triage unit. The next day would be her 86th birthday, but at that moment her future looked grim. Having older parents who have faithfully put their trust in their doctors' instructions over the years, I've been with them through their heart attacks, bypass and stent surgeries, and ongoing maladies and procedures. I've witnessed the negative side effects of their multiple (and astronomically expensive) pharmaceuticals that filled their kitchen counter top. I've seen first hand the results of conventional disease management, yet this episode was different. As my mom lied there on the gurney, writhing in excruciating pain from a leg spasm, paralyzed on one side of her body, unable to speak clearly, and crying; I could tell that this was the ultimate nightmare that she didn't want to be experiencing. However, thankfully my mom discovered that it's never too late to improve one's health by eating to live.



What was your life like before following Dr. Fuhrman's nutritarian eating-style?

I was tired all the time, but I thought it was due to old age; not wrong food choices. Because my mother had diabetes, suffered a stroke at age 66, and my siblings and I cared for her in my parents' living room for two years before her death, I made a conscious decision to carefully follow *everything* that my doctors told me to do over the years; not knowing that it would lead me down a dangerous path. Plus, other women my age were also being instructed to do the same so I thought I was doing the right thing. There was no different way at the

time.

Around age 60 I developed diabetes and was put on an oral diabetes medication for a couple of years, and then the doctor put me on insulin. I followed the recommended meal plan, insulin calculations and dosages; and when my blood sugars kept rising I complied with increasing the units of insulin. I even carried a glucose meter and injections in my purse so I would never miss a shot.

I also ate animal protein at every meal; it was a part of the food plan that the diabetic educators instructed me to follow: eggs with breakfast, lean meats with lunch and dinner, and a peanut butter sandwich before bed. Every endocrinologist that I went to said the sandwich before bed

was important to prevent dangerously low blood sugars in the night. Even with carefully following instructions, my blood sugars were either too high or too low. I lived in fear of the lows, especially when I was out in public or during the night. I even took a sandwich and juice to bed with me, just in case.

Then my blood pressure also climbed higher with each passing year so blood pressure medications were added to my growing list of medications. However, even with four medications, my cardiologist could never get it below 199/99. I had two heart attacks and multiple stents put into my body over the years: four stents in my kidneys, seven in my legs, and four in my heart, but I never got well. By the time of my stroke, I also had congestive heart failure and weighed 215 lbs. (5'8")

Even though you [Emily] improved your health through *Eat to Live*, I was too dependent upon my doctors' instructions to feel safe to make such radical changes at my age. Plus, a part of me thought it was too late to change; what's the use.

What changed your mind?

Having the stroke changed my mind. I was paralyzed on the entire right side of my body. My leg went into an intense spasm that wouldn't let up, even with medication to try to relax it. I couldn't speak so that others could understand me. I couldn't swallow my food. I couldn't even swallow a drink of water without a special ingredient to thicken it. My hand was clutched tight and I couldn't open it. I couldn't use the toilet without help. I wore adult diapers. I was suddenly trapped in a body that was immobile which required 24/7 nursing care; totally dependent upon others for *everything*.

After being discharged from the hospital, I was transferred to a nursing home for ongoing care and therapy. The night staff neglected to clip my call button onto my gown for me to reach it. I'd accidently wet myself during the night and couldn't call anyone for help. I was totally at the mercy of someone discovering my situation early the next morning. Needless to say, my family transferred me to a stroke rehab facility that following day; but even with the best care, the total loss of independence was enough to change my mind. I was ready to do anything to get better if/when I would be discharged; no matter if my doctors approved it or not. *

When did you start following *Eat to Live*?

After spending five weeks eating pureed meat and processed institutional foods, totally void of color, I was delighted to watch Dr. Fuhrman's *3 Steps to Incredible Health* that aired on our local PBS station the weekend after I returned home. Something "clicked" that day; plus I liked watching TV versus reading a book as my eyesight hadn't been good for the past couple of years. I totally understood what Dr. Fuhrman was talking about in his presentation. I began eating for health from that moment onward, and I've never looked back!



What's happened since then?

I've been off insulin for over six months now, and after giving myself four shots a day for over twenty years it's been wonderful to be totally free from them! Also, with eating this way I don't experience low blood sugars anymore so that all-consuming fear is gone.

I've lost about 65 lbs so far, and my blood pressure is never higher than 115/65. I'm down to just ½ dose of a blood pressure medication now, compared to four medications and continual, dangerously high blood pressures before following *Eat to Live*.

I'm more alert, I don't tire so easily, and I even have the stamina to ride a stationary bike for 2 ½ miles/day; plus, I lift weights and do various exercises to continue to strengthen my arms, legs, back, and facial muscles. I noticed this past winter when I got a cold and cough that it only lasted for a couple of days. The same thing happened with a sore and infected toe; it healed quickly, when it used to take a long time for a wound to heal.

Had I not followed high-nutrient eating this past year, there's no way that my weakened muscles from the stroke could've supported the obese weight. It would be very difficult for me to get around with sixty-five extra pounds on my body. I use a walker for stability, but I can now walk in grocery stores, go to the mall with assistance, attend church and family events, and see my friends. I know that I would be completely homebound without following *Eat to Live*.