

Living-Well Nutrition - Popular Diet Trends: Pros and Cons

A well-chosen nutrition strategy can

- help achieve optimal health and limit the risk of chronic disease.
- help accomplish health goals including weight loss, lower blood sugar, and reduced risk of hypertension.

What is considered a diet?

- the word 'diet' refers to the food someone eats in a day. A diet pattern would be the variety of foods someone eats over time

What should be considered when selecting foods to eat?

- consider if all essential nutrient requirements are met and if the diet will supply adequate energy to support daily performance.
- consider if the diet is sustainable, that we can eat this way over a long period of time safely.
- Last, consider if following this diet would help us achieve our health goals.

See table (below) for information on particular commonly popular eating patterns

Fad Diet	Overview	Studies/Research	Specific Foods/Plan	Potential Benefits	Potential Risks	Living Well comments
Low Carb Diet including Atkins & Zone (Rheanna)	Reduction of the ratio of carbohydrates as compared to fat and protein. Usually used for health goals and weight loss. Proponents claim this pattern leads to lower blood insulin, requiring the body to burn stored fat.	"Effects of Low-Carbohydrate Diets vs. Low-Fat Diets on Metabolic Risk Factors" https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3530364/	Limits carbohydrates. Focuses on protein, fats, limited amounts of fruit, and non- starchy vegetables. Includes meat, poultry, fish, nuts, eggs, low-sugar fruits, leafy greens	Relatively quick weight loss initially from water loss through glycogen depletion. May be low-calorie resulting in energy deficit that creates ongoing weight loss.	May lead to increase of LDL cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease, especially if high in saturated fat. Not sustainable for the average person -- often results in regaining of weight lost. Not losing weight after initial water weight	In general a well-balanced, moderate carbohydrate diet like this one can work for some individuals. Be careful to not exceed recommended saturated fat intake. Some carbohydrate is recommended because carbohydrates are necessary for optimal health.

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					loss may discourage individuals.	
Ketogenic Diet (Alana)	Extreme reduction of the ratio of carbohydrates as compared to fat and protein. Usually used for weight loss, therapeutic for certain metabolic diseases. Typically consists of a macronutrient ratio of 60-65% fat: 30-35% protein: 5-10% carbohydrate.	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5452247/ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499830/	<p>Severe restriction of carbohydrates. Focus is on high-protein, high-fat foods and vegetables. Little to no fruits, legumes or whole grains.</p> <p>Includes moderate/high-fat dairy, eggs, red meats, fish, green vegetables, avocado, butter, plant oils.</p>	<p>Relatively quick weight loss initially from water loss through glycogen depletion. May be low-calorie resulting in energy deficit that creates ongoing weight loss.</p> <p>Elimination of simple carbohydrates and added sugar can be beneficial.</p>	<p>Not sustainable for the average person; often results in regaining of weight lost. Diets high in saturated fats are linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and atherosclerosis.</p> <p>Can lead to micronutrient deficiencies resulting from limiting consumption of fruit, legumes, and whole grain foods.</p>	Food patterns that eliminate certain foods are rarely successful over the long-term. The diet may be effective for short-term weight loss, but is limited in fiber and essential nutrients found in carbohydrate-containing foods.
DASH diet (Rheanna)	Decrease the risk of hypertension by increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products as well as reducing saturated and total fat.	<p>“The DASH diet, Twenty Years Later.”</p> https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5509411/	<p>Decreased sodium and increased potassium, calcium, magnesium, and fiber intakes through consumption of plant based foods and lean animal proteins. Lower sugar consumption.</p> <p>Includes lean dairy and meats, fish, whole</p>	<p>May stop and possibly reverse hypertension.</p> <p>Supports weight loss.</p> <p>May lower the risk for cardiovascular disease atherosclerosis, osteoporosis, cancer and kidney stones.</p>	No risks have been associated with this diet because overall research indicates the DASH diet is optimal for a healthy lifestyle.	This diet promotes optimal health in a sustainable manner and therefore is recommended even for those without hypertension..

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			grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables			
Plant-Based/ Vegan/ Vegetarian (Haley)	Decreased consumption of animal-based foods for health, environmental benefits or animal rights reasons.	“Nutrition 2018:Resources: Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322072.php	Elimination or reduction of animal-derived foods. Focus on whole grains, plant-protein sources, vegetables and fruit. Eggs, dairy and honey included in vegetarian diet, but not vegan. e.g. Typical replacement of animal-based foods with tofu, beans, peas, and nuts, etc. for protein	Lower risk of diseases associated with consuming excess saturated fat and cholesterol that is present in animal-based foods. (i.e. cardiovascular disease) Note: It is possible to get adequate protein along with essential vitamins and minerals from a plant-based diet.	Vitamin B12 and iron deficiency are potential concerns. Food sources of B12 and iron include dairy and eggs (for vegetarians) or fortified cereals and nutritional yeast. B12 and iron supplements may be useful and/or necessary.	Plant-based diets emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains and plant protein sources promote health in most individuals. Careful planning and supplementation can help ensure adequate intake of all necessary nutrients.
High-carb/Low-fat diet (Joel)	Reduction of total fat with emphasis on complex carbohydrates and lean protein.	https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/75/1/11/4689240 https://nuts.com/healthy-eating/low-fat-high-carb-diet (research on inc. blood sugar)	Avoid simple refined carbohydrates. Include more complex carbs from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Plan is to limit fatty foods like: pizza, fatty meats, ice cream, cheese, full fat dairy, products, heavily processed foods.	Lower saturated fat, cholesterol and trans fat intake helps lower caloric intake resulting in weight loss. Higher fiber intake helps promote health. Increased energy with influx of carbs.	Excessive simple carbohydrate intake may increase blood glucose and fat levels. Although not usually a problem, very low fat intake can lead to hormonal imbalances, cognition problems, and fat-soluble vitamin deficiency.	A well balanced diet with moderate fat and carbohydrate intake would be better in healthy individuals.

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Dukan diet (Alana)	A weight loss diet emphasizing increased amounts of lean protein, water, and oat bran with daily exercise consisting of a 20-minute walk. Unlike many high-protein diets, the Dukan diet also emphasizes a reduction in fat intake.	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26024402	There are several “phases”, the first of which is a strict diet consisting of only lean protein and oat bran. Non-starchy vegetables are slowly added back to the diet, then starchy foods in limited quantities once the desired amount of weight is lost.	Reductions in refined carbohydrates can be beneficial for preventing blood sugar spikes and crashes, potentially reducing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and facilitating weight loss.	Limited intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products can lead to a variety of micronutrient deficiencies.	Very strict diets that eliminate groups of foods are rarely successful over the long-term and may lead to suboptimal nutrient intakes. Feelings of deprivation during the weight loss phase often cause people to gain the weight back once the initial dieting phase is over.
South Beach Diet (Alana)	A popular weight-loss diet that is low in carbs and higher in protein and healthy fats. Unlike some strict low-carb diets, consumption of complex carbohydrates are encouraged during the later stages of the diet.	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25149197	Limit refined carbohydrates as much as possible; emphasize lean protein, low-fat dairy, fruits and vegetables. The diet consists of 3 phases--the first being the most strict to “reset” hunger cues and cravings by eliminating junk food.	Eliminating junk food from the diet completely during the first phase can “jumpstart” weight loss and prevent blood sugar spikes from refined carbohydrate consumption.	Because the first phase is so strict, many people struggle to follow it. There is also limited instruction on portion sizes, which can prevent effective weight loss for some individuals.	The final “weight maintenance” phase closely resembles a balanced diet including complex carbs, lean protein, and healthy fats, but the initial “weight loss” phase can be limiting in some essential nutrients and may not be effective for all individuals due to severity of restriction..

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IIFYM (If It Fits Your Macros) (Haley)	A flexible style of eating that focuses on reaching an individualized goal for calories and macronutrients (protein, fat and carbohydrate) each day in order to change body composition.	<p>“Effect of Macronutrient Composition on Short-Term Food Intake and Weight Loss”</p> <p>https://academic.oup.com/advances/article/6/3/302S/4568628</p>	Consists of calorie counting and eating anything as long as you do not go over your desired macronutrient (macros) goals for the day. Requires choosing foods that will meet macros regardless of what the foods nutritional value is.	Can be helpful to figure out how your body responds to a certain amount of calories and macronutrients; can be utilized for weight loss or muscle gain. Also allows for food choice flexibility and improves feelings of guilt surrounding eating “unhealthy” food.	Not getting sufficient micronutrients (vitamins, minerals) or fiber due to only focusing on macronutrient content, which in turn can cause health problems. It can also lead to ignoring hunger cues and/or force feeding just to meet macros.	This plan can be suitable for someone that has a healthy relationship with food and wants to change their body composition, but not at all necessary. The ideal way to utilize it would be to focus on eating a healthy, balanced diet before examining macronutrient content.
Intermittent Fasting (Joel)	Reducing food intake window to a specific amount of time in order to trigger the metabolic fasting state.	<p>https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S095528630400261X</p> <p>https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-health-benefits-of-intermittent-fasting#section1n</p>	Eat a wholesome meal based off of the balanced plate, containing the same amount of calories as normal but within a shorter eating window	May prevent overeating or eating out of boredom, increase metabolic rate, immune boosting/stabilizing, spend less time preparing food/eating, save money on groceries. Sometimes chosen for convenience.	Not getting enough nutrients, or simply not eating enough, which can lead to muscle atrophy, low energy, headaches, impaired sleeping, and poor mood.	This is more of a eating pattern than a diet, and can help with overconsumption and possibly lead to positive health outcomes.

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Juice Fasting/Cleanses (Zona)	Consumption of only juice or other clear liquid for a short period of time.	Huber. "Effect of One Week Juice Fasting on Lipid Mechanism: a Cohort Study on Healthy Subjects." https://www.karger.com/Article/Pdf/69901	Clear juice with no fiber, plus lots of water to ease hunger. Consumption of no food during the juice fasting phase. The juice can be made from fruit and/or vegetables.	Relatively fast weight-loss due to very low caloric value. May relax digestive system and increase water soluble vitamins. Lacking in protein and some nutrients.	Fatigue, dizziness, low blood pressure, constipation, diarrhea, vomiting.	This is not recommended because it is not sustainable, and the possible risks can be dangerous due to lack of nutrients, including protein.
Detox diet						

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Paleo Diet (Rheanna)	Supposedly based on what paleolithic people ate with the aim to avoid processed foods and boost protein and fat intake.	2. Osterdahl M, et al. Effects of a short-term intervention with a paleolithic diet in healthy volunteers.	Avoid processed foods, all dairy, all grains, all legumes, and all refined sugar. Emphasis on lean meats, healthy fats, and lots of fruits and veggies.	Reduction of refined, processed foods high in empty carbohydrates while increasing protein and healthy fats can help with weight loss and blood sugar stabilization.	Calcium deficiency is the number one risk with paleo diets because they exclude all dairy products as well as calcium-rich foods like legumes. There is also a risk of not getting enough fiber because all grains are excluded.	Possible nutrient deficiency due to complete elimination of several food groups.
Gluten-Free Diet (Rheanna)	Avoidance of all products containing wheat or gluten: (wheat, spelt, kamut, durum, farro, bulgar, semolina, barley, and rye as well as processed food containing gluten-containing ingredients)	“Health Benefits and Adverse Effects of Eating a Gluten-Free Diet in Non-Celiac Disease Patients.” https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5866307/	Gluten-free grains including brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, corn, amaranth, buckwheat and sorghum as well as grain-free options like almond, coconut, tapioca, potato, lentils, beans, and cassava.	Overall reduction of gluten containing carbs leaves more room for nutrient dense carbs like fruits and veggies and grains like quinoa and millet that are higher in protein and fiber than wheat.	If grains are avoided completely there could be risk of getting too little fiber and B vitamins. Also eating refined gluten-free products such as those made with white rice flour can be bad because they are processed, energy dense and low in nutrients.	Whole-grain alternatives like quinoa and brown rice are suggested along with avoiding processed gluten-free foods like cookies and crackers. Typically recommended with documented existence of Celiac disease or gluten intolerance.

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Raw Food Diet/ Raw Till 4 (Zona)	Consuming mostly unprocessed, raw food (never cooked over 104- 118 degrees.)	Jones, “The Raw Food Diet: A Beginner’s Guide and Review.” https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/raw-food-diet	Mostly plant based including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Some raw fish and dairy products can also be consumed.	Potential weight loss due to low calories. Proponents claim improved vitality, overall health; decreased risk of chronic diseases.	Risk of nutrition imbalance, low in fat and fat soluble micronutrients. Potential risk of vitamin B-12 and iron deficiencies. Increased risk of tooth erosion. May lead to long term health concerns.	Difficult to follow, not sustainable. May need to consider nutrient supplements in the long run.
Macrobiotic Diet (Haley)	A form of plant-based eating that focuses on mindful eating practices, minimal cooking/seasoning, and locally grown produce that aims to improve balance and quality of life.	“Nutrient composition and anti-inflammatory potential of a prescribed macrobiotic diet” https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4596721/	Diet is made up of about 40-60% whole grains (i.e. rice, millet, quinoa), 20-30% locally grown vegetables, 5% beans and bean products (tofu, miso, tempeh) and finally 5% sea vegetables (nori, seaweed, agar). Also can include fish, locally-grown fruits and nuts. Chewing each mouthful of food 50 times is standard, as is eating 2-3 times per day and stopping before full.	Has similar benefits to plant-based diets such as lower risk of chronic disease; potentially anti-inflammatory. Mindful eating aspect can improve digestion and one’s relationship with food.	Strict way of living/eating can promote orthorexia and/or take a large amount of effort making it not sustainable. Also some nutrient deficiencies may occur.	While this plan includes many healthful practices and can have positive outcomes, it is not at all necessary and may not be enjoyable for many people.

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Mediterranean Diet (Zona)	A heart healthy eating plan that has strong evidence of lowering LDL-cholesterol, preventing heart disease and hypertension.	Mayo Clinic. "Mediterranean Diet: A Heart Healthy Eating Plan." https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801	High in fruits and vegetables, low in red meat, low saturated fat, low sodium, high potassium. Substitute butter with plant/nut oil. Whole wheat and brown rice, eating fish at least twice a week, limit alcohol consumption to, at most, 1 drink/ day	increased overall health. Possible prevention of hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, cognitive decline and cancer.	Weight gain in the absence of portion control - portion size is not emphasized.	This an evidence-based healthy diet. Recommended for all healthy people.
Alkaline Diet (Zona)	Believe of health improvement from replacing acid-forming food with alkaline foods	Leech. "The Alkaline Diet: An Evidence Based Review." https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/the-alkaline-diet-myth	increase consumption of alkaline rich food such as fruit, nuts, legumes and vegetables. limit consumption of acidic foods such as animal products, egg, dairy, grains and alcohol.	may benefit people with chronic kidney disease because it lower pH of the urine.	potential iron and vitamin B-12 deficiency.	The effect of alkaline diet is from consuming high fruits, vegetables and plant proteins, but not necessarily related to the pH value. Consuming alkaline foods will not alter the pH of our body, so that the base of this diet is incorrect.

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The 5:2 Fasting Diet (Joel)	A type of intermittent fasting pattern that consists of five normal eating days and two calorie restricting days.	https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/the-5-2-diet-guide#section1 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12724520	Focusing on nutritious, high-fiber, high-protein foods. The restricted calorie days limit calories to 500-600 and help consume fewer calories.	may help with weight loss, increase health benefits	can expect to feel overwhelming hunger during fast days	overall promotion of eating healthy is helpful, but fasting days can affect certain individuals more ie. eating disorders, diabetic, teenagers, pregnant women, malnourished individuals.
Short-Term diets (cabbage soup diet, grapefruit diet, military diet, lemonade cleanse) (Haley)	Diet focused on high-consumption of a specific food(s) that are typically low-calorie accompanied with a strict meal plan, typically lasting 3 days to a week or two in order to achieve quick weight loss.	“Very Low Calorie Diets: What You Need to Know” https://www.webmd.com/diet/low-calorie-diets#1	Either made up of one food for every meal (i.e. cabbage soup), or an arbitrary meal plan consisting of lower-calorie foods. Example: Military diet-includes grapefruit, peanut butter, eggs, bread, tuna, coffee, vegetables, apples, vanilla ice cream, hot dogs, cottage cheese, bananas, cheese & crackers	Some very low-calorie diets can be effective in obese individuals, however only under supervision of a doctor. In those with a healthy BMI, the only benefit may be loss of a small amount of water weight.	Muscle wasting is likely, especially in diets lasting 1 week or more. Fatigue, constipation, nausea, diarrhea, and even gallstones may result. Deficiencies in nutrients likely due to lack of variety and adequate calories, along with negative changes in hormones and metabolism.	Short-term diets are neither healthful nor effective for long-term weight loss. Adopting a balanced and healthy lifestyle is much more effective for sustainable body changes.

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FODMAP diet (Alana)	An elimination diet used for the treatment of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) by limiting foods that contain F ermentable O ligosaccharides, D isaccharides, M onosaccharides and P olyols.	Ireton-Jones, C. (2017). The low FODMAP diet. <i>Current Opinion in Clinical Nutrition and Metabolic Care</i> , 20(5), 414-419. doi:10.1097/mco.000000000000398	Initial elimination of FODMAP's, including wheat and rye products, some fruits, onions, garlic, legumes, nuts, some vegetables, lactose (dairy products), and artificial sweeteners. FODMAP-containing foods can then slowly be reintroduced to determine which specific foods cause GI distress.	Can reduce symptoms of IBS, including diarrhea, constipation, abdominal pain, gas, and bloating.	Elimination of many fruits, vegetables, dairy, legumes, and whole grains can cause nutritional deficiencies over the long-term. Many fiber-rich foods contain FODMAPs, so constipation can result. The diet is very strict and can be hard to follow.	The low-FODMAP can be very effective at relieving gastrointestinal discomfort among individuals suffering from IBS. The goal is to reintroduce tolerated foods over the long-term to ensure adequate nutrition while reducing symptoms of IBS.
Whole 30 (Joel)	Elimination style diet, ban certain foods for 30 days then re-introduce them back slowly.	https://whole30.com/whole30-program-rules/	Bans soy, dairy, alcohol, grains, legumes, and added sugars for 30 days.	Eating moderate portions of meat, seafood, eggs, lots of vegetables, some fruit, natural fats, herbs and spices, eating whole foods.	Elimination of specific foods can result in withdrawal, some nutrient deficiencies.	While this can be effective for weight loss and great way to start eating clean and healthy, this method can be very difficult to maintain.

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Resources:

1. Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance. <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/practice/position-and-practice-papers/position-papers/nutrition-and-athletic-performance>