

Diets: A Brief Explanation of Popular Diets

Dieting, the type of food a person eats, has become known as the restriction of specific foods to either lose weight or for medical reasons. There are many types of diets out there and they focus on specific goals. Diets that are used to lose weight, usually have some kind of restrictions. This could be an overall calorie restriction, a time restriction, or restricting a certain food group while favoring another. Diets used for medical reasons are specific to the disease, like diabetic or heart healthy diets. These may also have restrictions, but these restrictions are used to help prevent, treat, and control symptoms of the disease. There are also diets out there to help people gain weight. This could also be for a medical reason, or maybe a person is looking to build muscle, which often leads to weight gain because muscle weighs more than fat.

Every year there are common fad diets. A fad diet is a weight-loss diet that eliminates at least one essential food group or recommends excess consumption of one food group at the expense of other foods. Fad diets typically have an extreme program that produces results more quickly than a traditional diet and exercise program. For more information on how to spot a fad diet, check out these articles

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/9476-fad-diets>,
<https://www.eatright.org/health/weight-loss/fad-diets/staying-away-from-fad-diets>.



<https://antranik.org/what-five-pounds-of-fat-looks-like/>



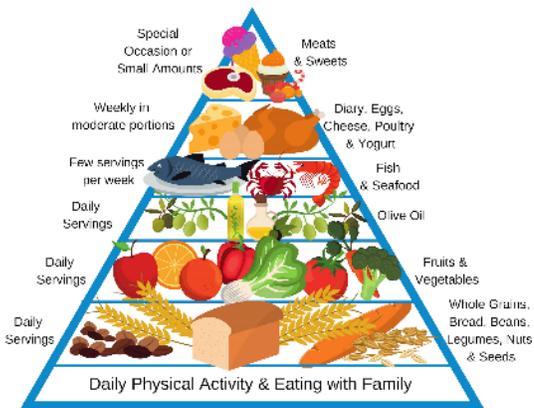
Intermittent Fasting Diet: There are two versions of this type of diet. The first is the 5:2, meaning 5 days of the week you eat normally and for 2 non-consecutive days you eat very few calories, normally less than 500 for women and 600 for men. The second type of fasting is to only eat during set hours of the day, for example between 11am and 5pm. This diet can be easier for some people because they feel they are able to restrict themselves during certain hours or days,

instead of having restrictions every day. In small studies, those who fast typically eat fewer calories, leading to weight loss, but there is not enough research to support or debunk this diet. The meal restrictions may cause a shortage of important vitamins and minerals. <https://www.webmd.com/diet/a-z/intermittent-fasting>,
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/intermittent-fasting-surprising-update-2018062914156>



Ketogenic (Keto) Diet: One of the most popular diets, this diet focuses on high-fat and very low-carbohydrate intake. Many people have had weight loss success in a short period of time using this type of diet, but little research has been conducted using the Keto diet as a weight-loss strategy. Sadly, once users stop following this diet, they tend to regain the weight they lost. The high fat intake, mainly saturated fats, is a concern for heart health. Along with high fat intake, this diet requires limitations of healthy foods like whole grains, legumes, and high-nutrient fruits and vegetables, making it difficult to meet your daily needs of vitamins and minerals. Current research has only shown the Keto diet to have a benefit to those suffering from epilepsy.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/the-truth-behind-the-most-popular-diet-trends-of-the-moment/art-20390062>, <https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/0119p26.shtml>, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/ketogenic-diet/>



MEDITERRANEAN DIET

<https://shimacrobiotics.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Mediterranean-Diet-Pyramid-2.jpg>

Mediterranean Diet: A heart-healthy diet based on the traditional diet of the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. Most of the diet consists of fruits, vegetables, potatoes, breads and grains, beans, nuts, and seeds. Olive oil is the main fat source. There are some restrictions on meat sources. Fish and poultry are allowed 2 times a week, eggs are limited to 7/week which includes those used in cooking and baking, and red meat is only to be consumed a few times a month. The Mediterranean diet is different than others because it includes regular physical activity. Unlike other diets, the Mediterranean diet is more flexible.

[https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672\(14\)00607-8/pdf](https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(14)00607-8/pdf), <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801>

DASH Diet: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, is a diet designed to help prevent and treat high blood pressure without the use of medication. The DASH diet, although primarily used for high blood pressure, also follows dietary guidelines to prevent osteoporosis, cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Following the DASH diet can lower your top blood pressure number by as much as 14 points. This diet focuses on vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy, whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts, which is very similar to the Mediterranean diet. This diet limits sodium (salt) intake. The normal version recommends less than 2,300mg of salt, or 1 tsp, while the low-sodium version is less than 1500mg per day. The DASH diet is not meant to be a weight-loss diet, but many people see a decrease in weight because this diet promotes healthier choices. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/dash-diet/art-20048456>, <https://dashdiet.org/>



Low-FODMAP Diet: Stands for Fermentable, Oligo-, Di-, Mono-saccharides and Polyols. These are sugars naturally found in foods that are highly fermentable and poorly absorbed during digestion. This diet has been used to help those with functional gut disorders, including indigestion and Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Within a month most patients notice a reduction in bloating and abdominal pain. This diet cannot cure the problems but is used as a tool to reduce and manage the common symptoms. The low-FODMAP diet provides a list of foods that are common triggers, but each person should slowly reintroduce those foods to learn their own triggers. Learn more on low-FODMAP and functional gut disorders here: <https://gi.org/topics/low-fodmap-diet/>, <https://www.acpinternist.org/archives/2019/01/functional-gut-disorders-become-clearer-as-models-emerge.htm>, <https://www.ibsdiets.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IBSDiets-FODMAP-chart.pdf>

Pegan Diet: The Pegan diet is a combination of the Paleo and Vegan diets. With these two diets together, the main focus is eating whole foods and plants with a majority of your diet coming from plants. Dairy and gluten are to be avoided on this diet. Although this diet includes vegan aspects, it still allows meat, but as a side rather than the main part of the meal. Meat should also come from sustainable sources.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2019/01/11/pegan-diet-paleo-vegan-next-big-diet-trend/2385966002/>, <https://www.health.com/nutrition/pegan-diet>, <https://foodinsight.org/what-is-the-pegan-diet-vegan-paleo-mashup/>

Carbohydrate Counting/Consistent Carb: Mostly used by those with diabetes. Carbohydrate counting is great to use if you administer insulin.

This allows you to know the amount needed for each meal. A consistent carbohydrate diet works to keep blood sugar levels even throughout the day, by providing a specific amount of carbs at each meal and snack, typically 45-60 grams per meal and 15 grams per snack. The consistency of the amount of carbs helps reduce the frequency of blood sugar spikes or drops. Check out more about the Consistent Carb diet from these sources:

<http://www.nmh.org/ccurl/359/512/diabetemealplan07,0.pdf>,

[https://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/root/pdfs/humannutr/Information for Unit Staff on Consistent Carb Diabetic Menu.pdf](https://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/root/pdfs/humannutr/Information%20for%20Unit%20Staff%20on%20Consistent%20Carb%20Diabetic%20Menu.pdf)

80/20

With all diets, except those followed for a medical condition, a great rule to follow is the 80/20 rule. This rule can be used a variety of ways, but the most common is following a diet 80% of the time and allowing some indulgencies 20% of the time.

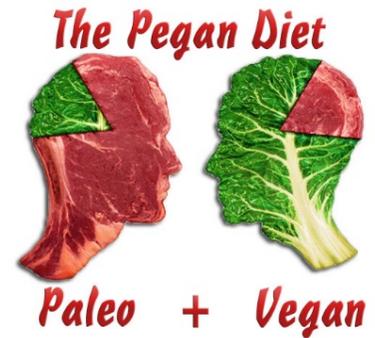
Sometimes life becomes an excuse to “cheat” a little on your diet, which causes many people to give up. The 80/20 rule is great because it allows for those days where following a specific diet is just not possible. This way you don’t feel like you are missing out because you are trying to eat healthier. Some people also feel the pressure of limiting/restricting certain foods causes stronger cravings; but allowing themselves to occasionally indulge in their favorite foods eases those cravings and helps them stick to their eating plan. This also emphasizes you should not feel guilty about eating those “unhealthy” foods. A healthy lifestyle includes a healthy mind and social life. It is perfectly fine to have Occasional days where you eat more calories or high calorie foods. It’s important to remember this isn’t something you have every day. You are working on becoming healthier, and it does take time.

At the end of the day, the diet you choose to follow is the one that makes you feel your best, provides a variety and balance of foods for healthy living, and becomes a lifestyle change. Be aware that if you are thinking about choosing a diet that is restrictive, you should talk to a certified nutritionist or registered dietitian to learn about the benefits or consequences of following that diet. Many people follow a weight-loss diet and see quick success, but then they go back to eating the way they were before and gain that weight back and sometimes add on a few more pounds. Next, they start another diet, and the cycle continues. This can cause even more health risks. Unless you have a medical reason for cutting out specific food groups, the best way to follow a healthy diet is to include all food groups; but pick healthier options, like whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy, and increase non-starchy fruit and vegetable intake.

Other References:

Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diet>

<https://www.virtua.org/articles/the-80-20-rule-eat-healthy-and-have-your-cake-too>



<https://supplementpolice.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-pegan-diet.jpg>





Popular Diets

Applying the Lesson

Choose one of the following activities to apply what you learned about your health and popular diets. Write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) to describe what you did and learned from the activity selected. Report your Applying the Lesson results by Online form, email, fax or hard copy to your county Extension Office.

Option 1: After reading the descriptions on popular diets, did you notice any similarities between them?

Option 2: What is a fad diet? How would you determine if a new diet is a fad diet in the future?

Option 3: How does the 80/20 rule work for diets and healthy lifestyles? Do you think you could apply this rule to your health plan?