Diet Comparison Guide





What you should know about today's popular diets.

Brought to you by MyLifeStages weight management experts Dr. Tom Hopkins, MD, and Erika Deshmukh, MS, RD.

Doctor's Orders 5 Guidelines for Lasting Results

- 1 / Look for life-long approaches to healthy eating and avoid "dieting," which is only a temporary solution.
- Avoid diets that are too restrictive, and eliminate important vitamins, minerals and nutrients.
- 3/ Strive to achieve a nutritionally-balanced diet with healthy foods from each food group.
- 4 / Achieve a healthy weight with a calorically-balanced diet and routine exercise.
- 5/ Plant-based diets are best for health and longevity. Make fruits, vegatables and whole grains your diet mainstay.

Side-by-side comparisons of 12 popular diets

Diet Name	Theory/ Concept/Premise	Caffeine?	Alcohol?	Length of Diet?	Cost?	Health Pros	Health Cons	Doctor's Final Say
Vegan	A vegan diet eliminates all animal products including meat, fish, poultry, dairy and eggs. Foods allowed include grains, beans, legumes, vegetables and fruits. It should include a higher intake of vegetables that are rich in iron and calcium.	In moderation	Avoid alcoholic drinks that are clarified using animal- derived substances.	Life-long	Average	 May decrease heart disease Generally lower in saturated fat High in fiber if eating lots of fruits and vegetables 	 Need to be diligent in meeting nutritional requirements, particularly iron, B·12, zinc, D vitamins and omega·3s 	Studies have shown that a plant-based diet is the best for health and longevity. Requires diligence in keeping up with enough fruits, veggies to meet nutritional needs, especially protein. Vitamin and nutritional supplement are needed. Okay, for long- term use if tolerable.
Pale Diet		In moderation	In moderation (avoid grain based alcohol)	Life-long	High *	 More fruits and vegetables Cuts out added sugar and sodium The combination of plant- based foods and a diet rich in protein can help control and regulate blood sugar, maintain weight loss and prevent Type 2 diabetes. 	 Exclusion of whole grains, legumes and dairy can be risky. These foods are nutrient-rich and contain important vitamins and minerals such as calcium and vitamin D. 	Paleo eliminates a significant amount of healthy vitamins and minerals. Could be helpful for a patient who is trying to "detox" off of a high carbohydrate or sugar diet. Okay, perhaps for a short-term use, but no more than 12 weeks.
Veg- etaria _{Die}	A vegetarian diet consists of no animal meat, but includes dairy, eggs and other products from animals. Foods allowed include fruits, vegetables, beans, dairy, eggs, nuts, legumes, grains, tofu and soy-based meat substitutes.	In moderation	In moderation	Life-long	Average	 May decrease heart disease Generally lower in saturated fat Emphasizes fruits, veggies and non-meat protein sources High in fiber if eating lots of fruits and vegetables 	 Need to be diligent in meeting nutritional requirements, particularly iron, B-12, zinc, D vitamins and omega-3s 	This is a healthy diet strategy, as plant-based diets are the healthiest.

* High – The foods encouraged can be more expensive than foods allowed on other diets, including grass-fed/free-range protein.

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Atkins Diet	 The Atkins Diet cuts carbohydrates. Foods allowed include red meat, eggs, cheese, butter and bacon. Foods NOT allowed include bread, pasta, potatoes, cereal, foods containing sugar, high sugar fruits and vegetables, and fruit juices. 	None initially. In moderation after 2 weeks.	None initially. In moderation after 2 weeks.	Phase one *	High **	 Less refined sugar, white rice / flour = less calories from refined foods Fruits, vegetables, and whole- grain foods are encouraged after the two-week induction period May improve lipid profile Modified versions promote a healthier variety of foods like lean protein, produce, nuts, legumes and, in some cases, whole grains and healthy fats. 	 May be too restricted in carbohydrates Too much protein can harm people prone to kidney issues 	A high protein diet that has been effective for weight loss. Modified Atkins diet is more practical and can be done long-term. Otherwise, a strict Adkins diet is hard to maintain.
Zone	 The Zone Diet promotes the following: A small amount of protein (app the size of your palm) at every meal and snack. "Favorable" carbs twice the size of the protein portion (including most fruits and vegetables, lentils, beans and whole grains). A smaller portion of carbs if you have chosen "unfavorable" ones (including brown rice, pasta, papaya, mango, banana, dry breakfast cereal, breads, tortilla, carrots, and fruit juices). 	No	In moderation	Life-long	Average cost if cooking for yourself. Meal- delivery services can be expensive.	 Portion-controlled serving of protein with lots of fruits and vegetables can lead to balanced diet with plenty of nutrients Emphasizes heart-healthy monounsaturated fats 	 May be too restricted in carbohydrates Too much protein can harm people prone to kidney issues 	Healthy diet,high protein intake. Can be used as a long-term diet plan.
Raw Food Diet	A raw food diet is based on eating whole, live, uncooked and un-processed foods such as fruits, vegetables, seaweed, sprouts, sprouted seeds, whole grains, beans, and nuts.	No	No	Life-long	Varies – dependent on season	 Similar to benefits of vegan/ vegetarian Eliminates processed foods high in sugar, trans.fats, and saturated fats Encourages healthy fats, high fiber and nutrients 	 Must be well-educated about preparation tecniques to include nutritionally balanced diet Takes a lot of preparation/time to maintain this long-term lifestyle in a nutritionally balanced way. 	A very specialized diet designed for the diligent dieter. It takes a lot of time, money, and patience. Not practical for long-term.
Med'- terranear Diet	A Mediterranean diet is primarily plant- based, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. Limits red meat to a couple times a month, but allows fish and poultry at least twice a week. Replaces butter with olive oil and canola oil. Uses herbs and spices to flavor foods instead of salt.	In moderation	In moderation (red wine only)	Life-long	Average – Estimated to cost less than a traditional western diet	 Emphasizes healthy types of fats known to reduce cholesterol and risk of heart disease Rich in cancer-fighting anti- oxidants 	 Moderate amounts of recommended alcohol may be misinterpreted to go over daily recommendations of 5oz for women and 10oz of wine per day for men. Use of moderate oil may easily go over daily allowances or portion control 	This is one of my favorites. It is heart healthy, and is practical to sustain lifelong. It provides most of the essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients that the body needs for good health. It is can be effective as a weight loss tool when consumed as a lower caloric diet without being too restrictive on food choices.

* Phase one (the most restrictive) lasts two weeks. The rest of the diet lasts as long as it takes to lose weight. Eventually, Atkins converts to a lifelong plan that limits carbs. ** High – protein and low carb food cost more than vegetables and fruits.

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	Com- mercial Diet	Popular commercial diets include programs/plans that expect you to purchase specific foods provided by the company. These diets offer weekly or daily group meetings or one-on-one sessions with a counselor.	In moderation	In moderation	As long as it takes	High *	 Tools for portion controlled meals Makes diet easy to follow 	 May not be sustainable for those who can't afford or wish to stop using specific tools. 	Good tools for weight loss and monitoring caloric intake and portion sizes. Works well as long as it is used consistently.
	Grapefruit Solution Diet	The Grapefruit Diet is based on an alleged ingredient in grapefruit that, when eaten with protein, burns fat. The newer version of this diet allows dieters to follow a weight loss plan of their choice but adds grapefruit (either natural or via a capsule) to their diet.	In moderation	In moderation	As long as it takes	High, if you use the grapefruit capsules	1) Can follow a nutritionally well-balanced diet in addition to the grapefruit	 May have adverse interaction with certain medications (not advised) Not FDA approved No accomanying dietary guidance, so it may or may not be part of a balanced nutrition plan. 	Not recommended. Not sustainable. No health benefits.
	Ornish Diet	The Ornish Diet is a vegetarian diet that only allows 10% of your calories from fat, 20% from protein and 70% from carbohydrates.	No	No	Life-long	Low	 May reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes May even reverse heart disease, according to studies 	 May be too restrictive for most Completely restricts beneficial foods high in omega-3s and monounsaturated fats such as fish, nuts, and avocado. 	Healthy diet but not practical. Requires diligence with calculating percentages of food groups.
	South Beach _{Diet}	The South Beach Diet focuses on low carbohydrates, high protein and healthy fats. However, it is not a strict low-carb diet, and you don't have to count carbs. The focus is on selecting the right carbs, including whole grains, specific fruits and vegetables, lean protein and appropriate fats (canola oil and olive oil).	Yes (1-2 cups)	No for Phase I. Red wine ok in Phase II. Any drink in moderation Phase III.	The first and most restrictive phase lasts two weeks.	Average, due to sub- scription fee	 Emphasizes lean proteins, low saturated fat and a drastic decline in processed foods Phase 2 and 3 are particularly heart healthy diets Substitutes healthier fats and carbohydrate sources overall by 3rd phase 	 Biggest concern is Phase 1 – limits and restricts food group High protein can lead to issues with liver, kidneys, and ketoacidosis if susceptible May lack fiber and essential nutrients 	The later phases of this diet are okay, yet it limits some essential nutrients and fibers.
	Gluten Free Diet	A gluten free diet excludes foods that contain gluten like bread, pasta, baked goods and other dishes unless they are specifically prepared to be gluten-free. Gluten is a type of protein found in grains like wheat, kamut, spelt, barley, rye, malts and triticale.	Yes	Yes to wine, Gluten free beer.	Life-long	Moderate to high as prepared gluten-free food is expensive and nut or bean flours are more expensive than wheat flours for baking and cooking.	 Eating gluten free can help reverse damage and inflammation to the intestinal track if you have a gluten intolerance or sensitivity Alleviates symptoms related to Celiac Disease May lead to a healthier diet filled with less processed foods, introducing higher quality grains, like quinoa. overall by 3rd phase 	 May lead to unwanted weight gain from eating "gluten-free" products, which often contain higher levels of fat and sugar Potential nutrient deficiencies from eliminating too many foods, in particular carbohydrates, for fear of a negative reactionessential nutrients 	Gluten is contained in many food items, especially many processed foods. This diet is ideal for people who are sensitive or intolerant to gluten. It is required for patients with celiac disease. It is a healthy diet that can be consumed long-term and can help support a healthy weight loss plan.

* High – Fees for individual programs may include dues, purchased food, counselors and online support.