

Lesson 4: Should we diet?

Information on diets

The following notes are based on materials appearing on <http://www.healthyweightforum.org/eng/diets/diet.asp>. No independent verification of the accuracy of the materials has been sought, but it is thought adequate as background for the lesson.

Choosing the right diet

Diet refers to what a person eats or drinks during the course of a day. There are many different types of diets, like the Atkins diet, the Zone diet, the South Beach diet and many more. It is important to remember that a diet that limits portions to a very small size or that excludes certain foods entirely to promote weight loss may not be effective over the long term. It is much easier to maintain a diet that takes into account liked and disliked foods and that also includes combinations of foods with enough calories and nutrients for good health.

When planning a diet it is important that to consider what calorie level is appropriate. Is the diet nutritionally balanced? Will this diet be practical and easy to follow? Will the diet be maintainable over a long period of time? This information outlines what to look out for in a diet.

Calorie level

Low-calorie Diets. Most weight loss diets provide 1,000 to 1,500 calories per day. However, the number of calories in a diet depends on a person's weight and activity level. At these calorie levels, diets are referred to as low-calorie diets. Self-help diet books and clinical and non-clinical weight loss programmes often include low-calorie diet plans.

The calorie level of the diet should allow for a weight loss of no more than 1 pound per week (after the first week or two when weight loss may be more rapid because of initial water loss). By estimating how many calories are being eaten in a day, a diet plan can be designed to lose no more than 1 pound per week.

Good nutrition

The diet must contain all the essential nutrients for good health. The nutritional guidance found on most processed food products can help choose a healthful diet. A healthful diet should include:

- **Adequate vitamins and minerals.** Eating a wide variety of foods from all the food groups will help to ensure the necessary vitamins and minerals are taken. If the diet has less than 1,200 calories per day, a daily vitamin and mineral supplement should be considered.
- **Adequate protein.** The average woman 25 years of age and older should get 50 grams of protein each day, and the average man 25 years of age and older should get 63 grams of protein each day. Adequate protein is important because it prevents muscle tissue from breaking down and repairs all body tissues such as skin and teeth. To get adequate protein in your diet, make sure you eat 2-3 servings from the Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts group of foods every day. These foods are all good sources of protein.
- **Adequate carbohydrates.** At least 100 grams of carbohydrates per day are needed to prevent fatigue and dangerous fluid imbalances. To make sure you get enough carbohydrates, eat 6-11 servings from the Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta group of foods every day.
- **A daily fibre intake of 20 to 30 grams.** Adequate fibre helps with proper bowel function. 1 cup of bran cereal, 1/2 cup of carrots, 1/2 cup of kidney beans, a medium-sized pear, and a medium-sized apple contain about 30 grams of fibre.
- **No more than 30 percent of calories, on average, from fat per day,** with less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat (such as fat from meat, butter, and eggs). Limiting fat to these levels reduces the risk of heart disease and may help with weight reduction. In addition, the amount of cholesterol in your diet should be limited. Cholesterol is a fat-like substance found in animal products such as meat and eggs. The diet should include no more than 300 milligrams of cholesterol per day (one egg contains about 215 milligrams of cholesterol, and 3.5 ounces of cooked hamburger contain 100 milligrams of cholesterol).
- **At least 8 to 10 glasses of water or water-based beverages, per day.** You need more water if you exercise a lot.

The different types of diets

Fixed-menu diet. A fixed-menu diet provides a list of all the foods that can be eaten. The advantage of this kind of diet is that it can be easy to follow because the foods are selected for you. However the disadvantage is that you get very few different food choices which may make the diet boring and hard to follow away from home. In addition, fixed-menu diets do not teach the food selection skills necessary for keeping weight off. If you start with a fixed-menu diet, you should switch eventually to a plan that helps you learn to make meal choices on your own, such as an exchange-type diet.

Exchange-type diet. An exchange-type diet is a meal plan with a set number of servings from each of several food groups. Within each group, foods are about equal in calories and can be interchanged as you wish. For example, the "starch" category could include one slice of bread or 1/2 cup of oatmeal; each is about equal in nutritional value and calories. If the meal plan calls for two starch choices at breakfast, you could choose to eat two slices of bread, or one slice of bread and 1/2 cup of oatmeal. With the exchange-type diet plans, there is more day-to-day variety and you can easily follow the diet away from home. The most important advantage is that exchange-type diet plans teach the food selection skills needed to keep weight off.

Pre-packaged-meal diet. These diets require pre-packaged meals. Such meals may help to learn appropriate portion sizes. The disadvantage to this is that they can be costly. Before beginning this type of diet, find out whether you will need to buy the meals and how much the meals cost. You should also find out whether the programme will teach you how to select and prepare food, skills that are needed to sustain weight loss.

Formula diet. Formula diets are weight-loss plans that replace one or more meals with a liquid formula. Most formula diets are balanced diets containing a mix of protein, carbohydrate, and usually a small amount of fat. Formula diets are usually sold as liquid or a powder to be mixed with liquid. Although formula diets are easy to use and do promote short-term weight loss, most people regain the weight as soon as they stop using the formula. In addition, formula diets do not teach how to make healthy food choices, a necessary skill for keeping your weight off.

Questionable diets. Any diet that suggests you eat a certain nutrient, food, or combination of foods to promote easy weight loss should be avoided. Some of these diets may work in the short term because they are low in calories. However, they are often not well balanced and may cause nutrient deficiencies. In addition, they do not teach eating habits that are important for long-term weight management.

Flexible diets. Some programmes or books suggest monitoring fat only, calories only, or a combination of the two, with the individual making the choice of both the type and amount of food eaten. This flexible type of approach works well for many people, and teaches them how to control what they eat. One drawback is that some flexible diets don't consider the total diet. For example, programmes that monitor fat only often allow people to take in unlimited amounts of excess calories from sugars, and therefore don't lead to weight loss.

It is important to choose an eating plan that you can live with. The plan should also teach how to select and prepare healthy foods, as well as how to maintain the new weight. Many people tend to regain lost weight. Eating a healthful and nutritious diet to maintain you're the new weight, combined with regular physical activity, helps to prevent weight regain.

The Atkins Diet Debate

The Atkins diet or the 'Atkins Nutritional Approach' is a lifetime nutritional philosophy involving a low-carbohydrate eating programme. The diet claims that you can lose weight on a high-fat, high-protein diet. It works on the premise that a healthy lifestyle requires a limited amount of simple carbohydrates, protein, exercise and proper portion control.

The diet plan works on 4 general principles; weight loss, weight maintenance, good health and disease prevention. Today, the Atkins diet is the most popular, longstanding approach to weight loss in America. Over 40 million people around the world have joined in on the Atkins revolution and more than 15 million overweight men and women have bought Dr. Atkins' best selling book 'New Diet Revolution'. There is even a professional body (The Atkins Centre for Complimentary Medicine) devoted to educating Atkins followers.

How does the diet work?

The Atkins diet holds the controversial belief that low fat is not the only way to go for a healthier lifestyle and weight control. Dr. Atkins blamed carbohydrates (grains, pastas, fruits, potatoes) for weight gain. He believed that if you reduced your carbohydrate intake then you would lose weight. Too many carbohydrates in your diet encourage your body to retain fat. When the body absorbs simple carbohydrates quickly, it causes an insulin response that speeds the conversion of calories to fat. The plan focuses on the consumption of nutrient-dense, unprocessed foods and vita-nutrient supplementation. It also restricts processed and refined carbohydrates (which make up to approximately more than 50 per cent of people's diets). It encourages you to eliminate sugar

from your diet as this contributes to a slower metabolism. The Atkins diet is designed to be a programme on which you can maintain a healthy weight for a lifetime and it is highly suitable (but not restricted) to those who prefer eating animal protein. The diet offers people who have failed on a low-fat diet a healthy, effective and safe alternative. Instead of carbs and sugar, eaters are allowed plenty of fat and protein.

There are four phases to the Atkins diet: 1) Induction, 2) Ongoing Weight Loss, 3) Pre-Maintenance and 4) Lifetime Maintenance. During Phase 1 (Induction), you restrict carbohydrate consumption to 20 grams each day, obtaining carbohydrate primarily from salad and other non-starchy vegetables. In Phase 2 (Ongoing Weight Loss), you increase carbohydrate in the form of nutrient-dense and fibre-rich foods by 20 grams daily in the first week and then 30 grams daily in the next week until you gradually lose weight. Then you subtract 5 grams of carbohydrate from your daily intake so that you continue sustained weight loss. In Phase 3, known as 'Pre-Maintenance', you make the transition from weight loss to weight maintenance by increasing the daily carbohydrate intake in 10 gram increments each week. In the last phase of the Atkins plan (Lifetime Maintenance), you select from a wide variety of foods while controlling carbohydrate intake to ensure weight maintenance.

There are mixed views on the Atkins diet amongst health experts and dieticians. Many experts are critical of low-carb diets but have not totally discounted the Atkins diet as an effective method of losing weight. Although they do assert that it is too early to adopt the low-carb diet, health experts do concede that it is worth exploring. One main criticism of the Atkins diet is that it does entail frequent meat consumption. However, followers argue that the programme can be tailored for different preferences and metabolisms. After the 'Induction phase' the Atkins diet plan can be modified. Despite the immense popularity of the diet, the Atkins diet plan continues to have many sceptics. A further criticism of the diet argues that a person is unlikely to keep the weight off over the long term. However, this claim could just as easily be applied to many low-fat or low-calorie weight loss plans, on which dieters are likely to feel hungry.

The Atkins Diet: Against

- Not ideal for vegetarians or vegans as it is a meat-heavy (protein) diet.
- Linked to osteoporosis, heart disease, colon cancer and renal disease.
- High in saturated fats and cholesterol.
- Low on fibre.
- Is sometimes below the recommended daily values for several vitamins and minerals such as calcium, potassium and magnesium.

The Atkins Diet: For:

- Allowed to eat fat and protein.
- Steady (and sometimes rapid) weight loss.
- Reduces intake of sugars and processed grains.
- Reduces appetite.
- Life-time approach to dieting.
- A 'never be hungry' approach to dieting.

Critics of the Atkins Diet

The American Heart Association (AHA) does not recommend high-protein diets for weight loss. They argue that the Atkins diet has not been proven effective for long term weight loss. They are critical of the focus on a high-protein diet emphasising foods like meat and eggs that are rich in protein and/or saturated fats. The diet is not recommended because it restricts healthy foods that provide essential nutrients. They also criticise the Atkins plan for its high cholesterol, fat and protein content and its low-fibre intake. The AHA asserts that most people already eat more protein and fat than their bodies need, and eating a high-protein, high-fat diet raises the risk of many types of disease. The most serious claim against the Atkins plan is that it is linked to a number of potential health risks such as osteoporosis, stroke, coronary heart disease, a propensity to form kidney stones, liver disorders and diabetes.

Advocates of the Atkins Diet

There are a number of misconceptions surrounding the Atkins diet plan, the most popular of which is the misconception that you consume mostly red meat and can never eat carbs. Many people view the diet as a bacon, burger and butter diet. However one of the benefits of the Atkins programme is that it gets you away from eating too much sugar and processed foods. The Atkins plan reduces (rather than excludes) your carbohydrate intake (like sugar, white flour and white rice).

Another misconception is that you can eat all you want while following the Atkins programme. Although the programme refuses to accept hunger as a way of life, it does believe in the philosophy of moderation. Eating a well-portioned and satisfying meal is an extremely important part of the Atkins diet. The Atkins plan teaches you to control your portion sizes.

In response to criticisms that the Atkins diet is linked to disease, contrary studies have shown that over a four month period, the Atkins diet helped a group of people drop an average of 21 pounds, lower their cholesterol and triglyceride levels and raise HDL ('good' cholesterol). Advocates of the diet argue that people at high risk for chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes will see a marked improvement. They go even further to claim that by following this plan you are actually laying a permanent groundwork for disease prevention.

Generally, critics are sceptical of how a high-protein, high-fat diet can result in weight loss. Research shows that people can keep off weight lost with the Atkins plan as long as they don't go back to eating the way they used to eat. People have successfully lost weight with this approach for over thirty years. Several studies have shown that men and women lost twice the weight on the Atkins plan, compared to those individuals following a 'high-respected' low-fat diet. However, many success stories involve support of some kind. Studies show that dieters typically lose more weight when they linked up with the Internet – a virtual dieting community where dieters can obtain weight loss information, Atkins diet recipes and contact other dieters who are sharing the same goals. On the Internet, followers can also get a personalised Atkins meal plan and 24/7 peer and professional support without leaving their home.

Review: the South Beach diet

The South Beach Diet is the latest in a series of diet fads. However, the principles applied in the South Beach Diet are not new, they are tried and tested. The South Beach Diet is not low-carb. Nor is it low-fat. Instead, it teaches participants to rely on the right carbohydrates and the right fats - the good ones. As a result, participants lose weight, lower their cholesterol, reduce their risk of heart disease and diabetes, and eliminate cravings without feeling hungry. Some call it the "updated version of the Atkins diet"

The origins of the South Beach Diet lay with Arthur Agatston, MD, a cardiologist whose motivation was to improve the cholesterol and insulin levels of his patients, who had heart disease, by developing a healthy eating plan. Agatston has also published a book about his plan, [The South Beach Diet: The Delicious, Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast and Healthy Weight Loss](#) which is growing in popularity by the day. (Read reviews of the [South Beach Diet book](#))

Although a glamorous name, the South Beach Diet involves a high degree of determination and self motivation. It appears to be scientifically based and is rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean protein, and it doesn't omit any major food groups.

According to Agatston, at the end of two weeks, most participants on the South Beach Diet are 8 to 14 pounds lighter. He notes the weight loss does not happen because participants eat less, but rather because eliminating simple carbohydrates has broken a bad eating cycle. As a result, participants continue to lose weight after the initial two-week period.

The South Beach Diet Phases

Phase 1, The Strictest Phase of the Diet - Lasts 14 days

In the first phase, you eat normal-sized helpings of lean meats, such as chicken, turkey, fish, and shellfish. Vegetables are also allowed, as are nuts, cheese, and eggs. The goal is to eat three balanced meals a day, and to eat enough so that you don't feel hungry all the time.

Diet Foods to enjoy include tenderloin, sirloin, skinless chicken or turkey breasts, all types of fish, boiled ham, turkey bacon, whole eggs, fat-free cheeses, peanuts and pistachios, green vegetables, legumes, canola and olive oils.

Diet Foods to avoid include beef rib steaks, honey-baked ham, breast of veal, all yoghurt, ice cream, milk including whole, low-fat, soy, and full fat cheeses, beets, carrots, corn, yams, fruits and fruit juices, all alcohol, all starchy foods such as bread, cereal, oatmeal, matzo, rice, pasta, pastries, baked goods, crackers, etc.

Expected Weight Loss: 8-13 pounds.

Phase 2, More Liberal Phase Lasts Until You Reach Your Weight Loss Goal

The second phase is similar to the first phase, but you reintroduce some of the banned foods and eat from all the dietary food groups. You can start eating high-fibre carbohydrates, such as whole-grain breads, which raise your insulin levels in a much milder way that do simple, starchy carbohydrates.

Additional Diet Foods to enjoy include most fruits, fat-free or 1 percent milk, other low-fat dairy foods, whole grain starches, barley and pinto beans and red wine.

Diet foods to eat sparingly include refined wheat baked goods, potatoes, beets, carrots, bananas, pineapple, watermelon and honey.

Expected Weight Loss: 1-2 pounds per week.

Phase 3 - Weight Maintenance

This diet phase, which is an even more liberal version of the initial diet plan, lasts the rest of your life. It should be used to maintain your healthy weight. Agatston describes this phase as a “way of life.” Should your weight begin to climb, you repeat the diet plan.

A typical day on South Beach Diet - Phase 1:

Breakfast

- 6 oz vegetable juice cocktail
- Eggs Florentine
- 2 slices Canadian bacon
- decaf coffee or tea w/ non-fat milk and sugar substitute

Mid morning Snack

- Celery stuffed with 1 wedge laughing cow light cheese

Lunch

- Chef salad (turkey, ham, low fat cheese on mixed greens)

Mid afternoon Snack

- 10 cherry tomatoes with 1/2 c low fat cottage cheese

Dinner

- Orange Roughy in scallion and ginger sauce
- Steamed snow peas
- Shredded cabbage sautéed in olive oil

Dessert/Snack

- Mocha Ricotta Creme

Although weight loss is achieved on the South Beach Diet some questions have been raised about the ability of the South Beach Diet to induce ketosis. This is a state when your body does not have carbohydrates to digest and results in rapid weight loss being achieved. Some health professionals are not convinced that by dropping carbohydrates and placing a greater emphasis on protein this is enough to induce ketosis.

Drawbacks of the South Beach

Much of the initial 8-13 pounds weight-loss is likely to be water-weight-loss caused by carbohydrate restriction. This weight loss is usually regained, as soon as carbohydrate intake resumes. A further drawback of the South Beach Diet is that it doesn't fully cater for people who don't or can't eat dairy. Many snacks are dairy-based, yet the diet bans soy in the first two weeks.

Although Dr. Agatston has concerns regarding the liberal intake of saturated fats permitted on the Atkins diet plan, and offers sound advice on the subject, the issue on complex carbohydrates remains unaddressed. Most of the world outside America thrives on complex carbohydrates and these foods do not keep us overweight, nor do they warrant a 14-day ban.

As with any diet, despite the many positive aspects of Agatston's South Beach Diet, participants should consult a doctor before commencing. A balanced diet and healthy lifestyle combining exercise is vital to maintaining weight loss.

Review: The Zone Diet

About the Zone Diet

Celebrities like Madonna, Demi Moore and Jennifer Aniston swear by the results of the Zone Diet (created by Barry Sears, PhD.). The Zone Diet contains 40% carbohydrate, 30% protein and 30% fat and is also known as the 40-30-30 plan. The Zone Diet works on the premise that 100,000 years ago, we were meat eaters and our bodies was designed to handle the demands of a meat-based diet. As we have evolved, more carbohydrates

have been introduced into our daily diet, causing an imbalance. The reason for our extra weight could be attributed to the many grains and starches in our diet (pasta, rice, breads, and potatoes). The Zone Diet's strategy calls for a return to the diets of our ancestors where meat, fruits and vegetables are the main dietary items.

How Does The Zone Diet Work?

The Zone Diet works by working the right ratio of carbohydrates to proteins and fats in order to control the insulin in the bloodstream. Too much of the hormone (insulin) can increase fat storage and inflammation in the body (conditions that are associated with obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease). Sears asserts that by using the Zone Diet you are actually optimising the body's metabolic function. Through the regulation of blood sugar, you allow your body to burn excess body fat.

The Zone Diet does not actually prohibit you from any particular food group; however food with high fat and carbohydrates such as grains, starches, and pastas should be avoided. Fruits and vegetables are the preferred source of carbs and monounsaturated fats (such as olive oil, almonds, avocados) are the ideal choice of fats. The Zone Diet claims to use food as a drug for overall good health, weight loss and prevention or management of heart disease and diabetes.

Sears says that you can test to see whether you are 'hormonally' correct by eating following the Zone diet and see how you feel four hours later. To simplify the Zone Diet, fill one-third of a plate with low-fat protein, and then two-thirds with fruits and vegetables.

The Debate on the Zone Diet

The Zone Diet has neither been rejected nor endorsed by health organisations. Some health experts see some elements of the Zone Diet as favourable, especially the low-fat content. The ADA (American Dietetic Association) sees the Zone Diet as just another fad diet. Some health experts argue that there are safer diets such as the '5 A Day' programme (which encourage people to consume five servings of fruits and vegetables a day).

The Zone Diet: For:

- The Zone Diet features good amounts of fruits and low starch vegetables and is low in saturated fats
- Restricts low nutrition carbohydrates; and
- If followed correctly allows for steady weight loss.

The Zone Diet: Against

- Complicated and scientific
- Restricts calorie intake means it's hard to stay on
- Eliminates some essential vitamins and minerals found in certain foods
- Expensive to follow
- Time consuming and inconvenient

Advocates of the Zone Diet

Advocates for the Zone Diet include celebrities and also some health experts who say that the Zone's recommendations don't stray far from the USDA's (United States Dietary Association) dietary guidelines. Critics have argued that the Zone Diet has flawed ratios but Sears argues that the Zone diet is really a low glycemic-load diet that has adequate protein. Sears also defends the criticism that Zone Diet is too complicated. He believes this is a misconception because his first book on the Zone Diet was targeted to cardiologists who were more scientifically-oriented.

Critics of the Zone Diet

The AHA (American Heart Association) classifies the Zone Diet as high protein and does not recommend the Zone Diet for weight loss. They assert that the Zone Diet has not been proven effective in the long term for weight loss. They issued an official recommendation warning against diets like the Zone Diet. They believe that the Zone Diet is hazardous as it restricts the intake of essential vitamins and minerals present in certain foods. They are concerned that the protein ratio in the Zone diet is too high even if the minimal fat ratio is good. Robert H. Ecker M.D of the A.H.A., finds the Zone Diet's theory on insulin flawed and argues that there is no scientific proof that the hormone insulin plays a big role in weight regulation.

Review: the Low-carb Diet

Propelled into the spotlight by celebrity advocates who testify to their results, low-carb diets have received enormous attention and are fast becoming the most popular type of diet. Low-carb diets such as the Atkins Diet and the Zone Diet work on the rationale that eating a diet that is low in carbohydrates will assist in weight loss. However, as low-carb diets are becoming a fast growing trend, it is also quickly becoming the subject of

contentious debate amongst health experts and dieticians who can't seem to agree on whether low-carb diets are actually a breakthrough in weight loss or a detriment to our health.

What are Carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are a vital part of our diet and provide essential vitamins and minerals. They are one of the six nutrients and are a great source of energy. Our body converts carbohydrates to calories, which the body uses as energy. 1 gram of carbohydrate will transform itself to 4 grams of calories. Carbohydrates are a readily available source of energy. Most carbohydrates are quickly and easily used by the body for energy and can be stored in the muscles for exercise. Carbohydrates are important because they help the organs in the body function properly and can assist in regulating sugar levels in the bloodstream. However, too many carbohydrates in the body can cause weight gain. Low-carb diets are working on the underlying assumption that too many carbohydrates in the body will cause the body to accumulate fat.

Simple and Complex Carbohydrates

The body converts carbohydrates during digestion into sugar form. Carbohydrates can be categorised as 'simple' or 'complex'. Simple carbohydrates are quickly digested and release sugar quickly into the bloodstream, whereas complex carbohydrates are harder to break down and gradually release sugar into the bloodstream. Examples of simple carbohydrates are lollies, soft drinks and juice. Examples of complex carbohydrates are whole grain bread, vegetables and fruit. Low-carb diets focus on reducing carbohydrates drastically. However, some dieticians state that eating a diet consisting of both simple and complex carbohydrates is necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The Low-carb Advocates

Low-carb diets like the Atkins diet and Zone diet have yielded impressive results including significant weight loss. Although there are many varieties of low-carb diets, they do have one main thing in common – they demand a reduced carbohydrate intake. Eating large amounts of carbohydrates causes an overproduction of insulin in the bloodstream which may lead to weight gain. If there is too much sugar in the bloodstream, the body will respond by turning this sugar into fat. On the low-carb diet, individuals are consuming less than the recommended carbohydrate intake of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The NAS recommends no less than 120 grams of carbohydrates per day. However, most low-carb diets actually consist of a ratio of carbohydrates which fall well below the set guidelines. Advocates of the low-carb diet argue that there have been numerous studies which prove that low-carb diets raises HDL (the so called 'good' cholesterol) and links low-carb diets to the prevention of heart disease and diabetes. However, presently the benefits of low-carb diets have not been sufficiently validated by the health community.

Critics of the Low-Carb Diet

Critics argue that there are no proven long term benefits of low-carb diets. Although many individuals have had successes with low-carb diets, critics argue that these results are short lived, with many gaining one third of the weight they'd lost. This group argues that it is not the high consumption of carbohydrates which is making us fat but rather the over consumption of high calorie foods (which can include carbohydrates). They assert that low-carb diets feature foods which are high in fat and protein (such as steak, ham, bacon and dairy), and can potentially be harmful to our bodies. Food high in saturated fat can have negative effects and may be linked to heart disease and various cancers. Moreover, having too much protein in body can cause kidney damage and increase the risk of osteoporosis. Only further research will tell whether low-carb diets are a health risk or a breakthrough in weight management. Until then, health experts have cautiously neither rejected nor endorsed low car diets. They recommend that individual maintain a healthy and balanced diet which consists mainly of vegetables, fruits and grain.

Review: the Negative Calorie Diet

About the Negative Calorie Diet

The Negative Calorie diet works on the premise that certain foods create negative calorie effects (negative calorie foods), allowing you to lose weight. The Negative Calorie diet is controversial because the theory is not scientifically sound. No foods actually possess 'negative calories'. However, advocates of the Negative Calorie diet say that you can literally eat your way to weight loss. A [negative calorie diet ebook](#) has even been published on this topic.

How Does the Negative Calorie Diet work?

The theory behind the Negative Calorie diet is extremely appealing. It works on the idea that your body has to burn energy in order to digest certain foods. As a consequence, your body is actually burning fat. Take for example – an orange, which may contain 50 calories, it would take a certain amount of energy from your body to

process all of the nutrients and vitamins within the orange. In doing so, you would burn more than 50 calories. However this is also highly dependent on the speed of your metabolism.

The Negative Calorie Diet claims that after consuming certain 'negative calorie foods' (like an orange), your body is left with a net calorie results which is a negative calorie deduction. So for every orange you eat, you should burn off 25 calories. This is why advocates of the Negative Calorie Diet encourage you to eat frequent healthy meals, in doing so you are actually increasing the speed of your metabolism.

The Debate on the Negative Calorie Diet

Critics of the Negative Calorie diet argue that no foods possess 'negative' calories and you cannot eat your way to weight loss. They also claim that by following the Negative Calorie Diet you are potentially offsetting your positive calorie energy reserves, cancelling out the effectiveness of weight training. This criticism argues that we need calories to create energy both for exercise and for recovering from exercise. On the other side of the debate, advocates of the Negative Calorie Diet concede it is true that there is no such food, which contain 'negative calories'. However they do argue that the by ingesting certain foods you are increasing the metabolic processes which can result in weight loss.

The Negative Calorie diet – Against:

- No scientific proof to confirm its effectiveness
- Very little information surrounding diet
- More theoretical than practical

The Negative Calorie diet – For:

- Little effort involved
- Promotes consumption of foods rich in vitamins and minerals
- Increases the body's metabolism

The Negative Calorie diet works on the concept that certain negative calorie foods contain a surplus of vitamins and minerals which can speed up enzyme production in quantities sufficient to break down not only its own calories, but possible additional calories present in the digestion system. These negative calorie foods includes:

- Asparagus
- Watermelon
- Pineapple
- Grape Fruit
- Papaya

Review: the Cabbage Soup Diet

The Cabbage Soup is an all-you-can-eat-cabbage-soup diet which claims that the more cabbage soup you eat, the more weight you'll lose. The diet's so-called fat burning soup contains negligible calories so you don't have to worry about gaining weight. The Cabbage Soup Diet states that by adhering to the Cabbage Soup Diet for 7 days will result in immediate weight loss.

How Does the Cabbage Soup Diet work?

On the **Cabbage Soup Diet**, individuals are encouraged to eat as much Cabbage soup and consume as much water as they want. Other foods are involved as well but their intake is severely restricted. The cabbage soup can be eaten as many times but it is not recommended that you eat soup only as it can result in malnourishment. Drinking 7-8 glasses of water a day is also recommended. The Cabbage Soup Diet's 7-Day plan is easy to follow, however dieters are asked to consult their doctor before following this 7-day meal plan.

The Cabbage Soup Diet

Day 1: Cabbage soup, plus any fruit (except bananas). Drink unsweetened tea, black coffee, cranberry juice and water.

Day 2: Cabbage soup, plus other vegetables (raw, boiled or steamed) and avoid dry beans, peas and corn. For dinner, eat a baked potato with butter.

Day 3: Cabbage soup, plus other fruits and vegetables.

Day 4: Cabbage soup, plus up to 8 bananas and fat-free milk.

Day 5: Cabbage soup, plus up to 6 tomatoes and up to 450 grams of meat or fish.

Day 6: Cabbage soup, plus meat and vegetables.

Day 7: Cabbage soup, plus brown rice, pure fruit juice and vegetables.

The Debate on the Cabbage Soup Diet

The obvious criticism of the Cabbage Soup Diet is that it is not a nutritionally sound plan nor does it make any claims to permanent weight loss. The general consensus is that the Cabbage Soup Diet is effective in temporary and quick weight loss but is not effective for long-term weight loss. The actual cabbage soup does not contain any magical weight loss ingredient, although it is almost calorie free.

The Cabbage Soup Diet – Against:

- Does not contribute to long-term weight loss
- Not nutritionally balanced
- Monotonous
- Lacks some essential vitamins and minerals

The Cabbage Soup Diet – For:

- A do-it-yourself diet
- Not very complicated to follow
- Affordable
- Good break from junk-food diet

Review: the Mayo Clinic Diet

The Mayo Clinic Diet has nothing to do with the Mayo Clinic health centre and hospital in Rochester, USA. The Mayo Clinic Diet was conceived 30 years ago and the origins of the Mayo Clinic Diet still remain unknown. Today it appears in many forms but one main characteristic to a Mayo Clinic Diet is that it usually contains grapefruit and is usually always high in protein and low in carbohydrates.

How Does the Mayo Clinic Diet work?

The theory behind the Mayo Clinic Diet is that a low-carbohydrate diet plan will result in quick weight loss. The Mayo Clinic diet utilises grapefruit at each meals as a way of encouraging your body to burn fat. Knowledge of the Mayo Clinic diet has been perpetuated by junk mail, word of mouth, faxes and the internet. There is no official Mayo Clinic Diet but most versions are high protein, high-fat.

The Mayo Clinic Diet is usually three to seven days in duration. On the diet, you are allowed to eat an unlimited amount of grapefruit, meat and poultry. The Mayo Clinic Diet uses meat and fat to stop hunger, and insists that eating more fat in your diet will result in weight loss. This Mayo Clinic diet concept works on the premise that eating fat allows your stomach to feel full, which results in a reduced appetite. On the Mayo Clinic diet, you can actually eat fried foods and as much meat as you want.

The Debate on the Mayo Clinic Diet

Like many other diets, the Mayo Clinic Diet promotes temporary quick weight loss but is not necessarily safe or nutritionally balanced. Critics argue that the Mayo Clinic Diet does not contribute to long-term success with weight loss. Health experts are sceptical of the Mayo Clinic Diet's claim that you can lose 52 pounds in just a couple of months. They also argue that grapefruit does not contain any fat-burning qualities. Although some dieticians do concede that the Mayo Clinic Diet can result in weight loss, it is usually only temporary. They also warn that the diet is not safe and should not be followed for more than two months, after this time, dieters should go back to a low-carb diet to prevent putting all the weight back on.

The Mayo Clinic Diet – Against:

- Does not work for long-term weight management
- Low in complex carbohydrates
- Can result in fatigue and lack of concentration
- Unlimited consumption of anything high in fat is dangerous

The Mayo Clinic Diet – For:

- Eat until you feel satisfied
- Allowed to eat fat and fried foods
- Affordable
- Can result in immediate weight loss

Review: the Mediterranean Diet

As we are on a never-ending search for a healthier diet, it is not unusual for us to look to other countries for inspiration. One particular diet which is gaining momentum is the Mediterranean Diet. A dieter's dream and the antithesis of most diets; the Mediterranean diet is easy to follow, requires a high consumption of (monounsaturated) fat and red wine!

The Mediterranean Diet is a nutritional concept which states that consuming olive oil and wine will lower the risk of heart disease and will combat obesity. The Mediterranean diet derives its name from the countries which border the Mediterranean Sea. There are many variations of Mediterranean diet due to social, political and economically differences between Mediterranean countries. However, the Mediterranean diet does share one common characteristic - the large consumption of olive oil, which dominates all Mediterranean meals.

How Does The Mediterranean Diet Work?

The Mediterranean Diet seems a contradiction in itself; it encourages individuals to eat more mono-saturated fats to become healthier. Does this concept have any merit to it? The Mediterranean diet works on the notion that most of their meals consist of monounsaturated fats (ie. olive oil) which counteracts the animal fats. Unlike animal fats, monounsaturated fats do not raise blood cholesterol levels. Monounsaturated fats are the 'good' fats which are required for the body in order to function properly.

Advocates of the Mediterranean diet also contend that red wine, which is consumed frequently in Mediterranean diets, is also a significant factor in reducing heart disease. Although this has not been proven yet, red wine is renowned for their antioxidant qualities and contains bioflavonoid, which helps to eliminate bad toxins in the body.

Characteristics of the Mediterranean Diet

Although there are several variations of the Mediterranean diet, however all share the same characteristics. The Mediterranean diet consists of:

- High consumption of olive oil (emphasis on consuming monounsaturated fat)
- High consumption of fruits, vegetables, breads, cereals (such as pasta, beans, nuts and seeds)
- Moderate consumption of fish and poultry
- Moderate consumption of wine (two to three times a week)
- Low consumption of eggs and red meat.

Current Research on the Mediterranean Diet

As a result of low incidents of heart disease and death rates in Mediterranean countries, more and more countries are looking to their Mediterranean neighbours to help them with their diet.

It is a curious phenomenon that Mediterranean countries like France and Italy have a few reported cases of heart disease compared to their American counterparts, which share a very similar diet. Both America and France consume high levels of animal fat but France has comparatively lower cases of heart related disease. Admittedly this could be due to other factors such as lifestyle.

Current studies are investigating how close the Mediterranean style diets are to the AHA (American Heart Association) dietary guidelines. It is evident that those who follow the Mediterranean diet consume less saturated fats than those who are on the average American diet. However, there are some key similarities. For instance, the USDA food guide pyramid comprises many of the foods that are emphasised in the Mediterranean diet.

If these studies prove that the Mediterranean diet is an effective way of reducing heart disease then it will have significant repercussions for the health community.

Review: the Diabetic Diet

Diabetes is a complicated disease. Whether you are a border-line or a full diabetic, it is imperative that you maintain control of your life. According to the American Diabetes Association, the symptoms of a diabetic are subtle and sometimes over looked. However, if you are a diabetic, what is happening inside of your body is not subtle, for your body lacks the ability to store and process simple and complex sugars. Not paying attention to a diabetic diet plan can result in worsening health conditions.

You need to exercise on a daily basis, monitor your blood pressure and check your blood sugar. It's not about avoiding sugars and carbohydrates, it's about controlling them.

If you haven't met with a dietician or a diabetes educator about a sensible diabetic diet plan, it is advisable to do so. A trip to your local hospital and asking to speak to the Head Dietician will allow you to understand what needs to happen in order for you to stay healthy. You will also be presented with a list of acceptable foods for a diabetic diet.

Contemporary Science Issues

Developing a practical approach to a diabetic diet is the primary focus of this article. In this day and age, when the family is busy and meals are rushed, how does a diabetic keep an accurate count of what they are consuming on a daily basis?

Thankfully the bookshelves are full of cookbooks for diabetics, doing the research for you beforehand, as the ingredients are already pre-measured and listed. It is simply a matter of taking your shopping list and buying the right ingredients for a diabetic diet.

Vegetables will supply you with carbohydrates, protein and dietary fibre as well as vitamins and minerals. One half cup of vegetables (cooked) or one cup of raw vegetables with your meals will help you maintain control. Some of the vegetables include:

- Green Peppers
- Turnips
- Green Beans
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cauliflower

If you use canned vegetables, you would do well to rinse them with cold water prior to cooking to remove the excess salt. Your raw vegetables should be eaten without sauces or dips, and there are many low-fat salad dressings on the market today if you simply have to dip your veggies.

Cooking with spices is another way to enhance your meals. Adding onion and garlic when you can, gives you an extra edge on flavour. Also using lemon juice instead of butter or margarine will help keep you in check, as many of these spreads have added fats and preservatives that are not healthy for diabetics. If the meat has a bit of fat on it, cut the fat off and toss it into the vegetable pot for added flavour. Discard the fat after cooking the vegetables.

You have six basic food lists to draw from when planning your diabetic diet meals. This group was formulated by a committee from The American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association.

The list contains the following groups:

- Starch/Bread List: includes beans, breads, cereals, grains, crackers and some vegetables
- Meat List: including certain cheeses that you can substitute for meat
- Vegetable List: fresh, frozen and canned
- Fruit List: fresh, frozen and canned fruits
- Milk List: skim, whole and non-fat
- Fat List; unsaturated and saturated fats

A full list can be found in any Diabetic cookbook or from the American Diabetes Association website. Your doctor will also provide you with a listing. There are three types of Diabetes: type 1 diabetes, type 2 and gestational. You basically need

- 1 fruit
- 2 meats
- 2 breads
- 1 milk
- 1 fat

Diabetic Diet Plan

This should be your programme for every meal. Below is a sample of a Diabetic Diet Plan to get you started:

Breakfast

4 oz. Juice
1 slice of bread toasted
2 eggs
8 oz. milk
1 tsp. butter or margarine

Lunch

½ cup sliced cucumber on lettuce
mushroom and spinach omelette
1 slice bread
1 tsp. butter

½ cup canned vegetables (rinsed and drained well)
coffee or tea

Dinner

1 cup homemade bouillon (to control salt)
1 pork chop grilled (fat trimmed)
½ cup cooked beets
½ cup cooked green beans
1 small salad with fat-free dressing
1 slice bread

You do have free foods available that will not impact your health:

- Broth
- Carbonated or mineral water
- Club Soda
- Coffee or teas
- Diet soft drinks
- Sugar-free drink mixes
- Sugar-free tonic water
- Cranberry Juice
- Sugar-free Jell-O
- Sugar-free candy
- Low-sugar jams and jellies

It is not a matter of limiting sugar, fats and salt. It is a matter of moderating what you eat and creating the right balance leading to a longer, healthier life.

My Low GI Diet

"I've been on a low GI (glycemic index) diet for some time now, and although slow, the weight is coming off gradually.

"At first I knew nothing about this "new fangled" diet, but fortunately I have a friend whose husband is also on the low GI diet, and she gave me heaps of tips to help. He, by the way, has lost heaps of weight. How come men seem to be able to lose it so much quicker than we women? Not fair!

"I've come to learn that potatoes are high GI, whilst sweet potatoes (kumara) are low. That's okay, as I love kumara and have found quite a few good recipes using them. White is not good, I have discovered. Wholegrain breads are best, and even better if a bit of oat bran is added to homemade. Oat bran added to just about anything helps lower the GI of the foods you eat. I've had it in muffins, pancakes, soups and stews, you name it! Of course, I've added it to my breads as well. You don't know it is there, but it does lower the GI so much.

"Low GI foods don't break down in the intestines as quickly as the high GI ones. Therefore, the sugar doesn't come in a rush, forcing blood sugar levels up. The low GI foods break down slower, and therefore the sugar is released more slowly, resulting in more stable and even blood sugar readings – essential for diabetics! Since starting on the diet, my blood sugar levels have been soooooo much better than before. They were much too high previously. Also my blood pressure seems to have stabilised.

"So basically, the low GI diet means low-carbs in the main. Remember that white is bad, full grain is good. Basmati rice is about the best for Glycemic index, rather than brown. It is about the one exception.

"We have had more pasta meals, with wholemeal pasta, and tomato based sauces. Sometimes I mix potatoes with my sweet potatoes, to keep the GI down a bit.

"All in all, I am feeling much better in myself. Losing weight, though slowly, and rejoicing in the fact that my blood sugar and pressure are more normal. Also, it is great to know that I don't have to deprive myself totally of things I really love. I can indulge myself occasionally with an ice-cream or some chocolate, without going overboard. (All things in moderation).

"Although the weight loss in my case is slow, I think that it is better for me than some of the other diets I have tried in the past, which have done nothing much except make me feel deprived and miserable. At least now I am happy.

"Low GI recipes are a bit hard to come by, but they are beginning to increase, and I have found some good ones on the web.

"I like this eating plan, it suits me!"