



Diets That Work

Are you confused by all the weight loss diets out there? It can be hard to know what works and what's healthy. Everyone wants a diet that promises to take weight off quickly. But the best kind of weight loss is slow and steady—about 1/2 to 2 pounds a week. You'll want to find an eating plan you can live with for the long-term and that keeps the pounds off permanently.

This resource is about three diets that have been proven to work:

- The Mediterranean diet
- A diet moderately low in carbohydrates
- A vegetarian or vegan diet

DID YOU KNOW?

**It's not just what you eat that counts.
Regular exercise needs to be part of your
routine, whatever type of diet you choose.**

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating that's common in Greece, Spain, southern Italy, and southern France. Traditional foods in those areas include fish, vegetables, fruits, beans, breads high in fiber, whole grains, and healthy fats such as olive oil or canola oil. Nuts are part of the diet as well. The Mediterranean diet is low in red meat, cheese, and sweets. Many of the meals are vegetarian. A moderate amount of wine can be included daily.

This type of diet can help lower your risk for heart disease, prevent type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, and lower cholesterol. Some researchers also claim that this diet can prevent depression, dementia, and Parkinson's disease.

Sample Dinner Menus

- Chopped Greek Salad with Chicken and Feta Cheese
- Roasted Eggplant, Onion, and Tomato
- Greek Yogurt with Figs

A MODERATELY LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIET

This diet, similar to the South Beach diet, promotes the use of lean protein foods and high-fiber, nutrient-rich carbohydrates, such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. The diet also includes some types of fat (healthy unsaturated fats) and low-fat dairy products. It excludes white flour products and most starchy carbohydrates like potatoes, rice, and pasta.

In general, this type of diet is healthy and can result in weight loss. You don't need to count calories or do other complicated calculations to follow this diet. Nor do you need to deny yourself regular meals. Cooking for this diet is fairly easy. You can also modify the food choices if you are vegetarian or vegan.

Sample Dinner Menus

- Baked Salmon
- Roasted Brussel Sprouts
- Green Salad
- Tangerines

A VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN DIET

A vegetarian diet generally excludes animal products. But some vegetarians do eat small amounts of animal products; for example, some vegetarians eat milk and eggs along with fruits, vegetables, and grains. Other vegetarians might include fish but no meat. A vegan diet is a diet that excludes all animal products. People who follow a vegan diet need to take vitamin B12

supplements and include protein, such as nut butters, beans, and nuts, to make sure they get all the nutrients they need.

Most vegetarians eat fewer calories than non-vegetarians. A vegetarian diet can help fight heart disease and high blood pressure.

Sample Dinner Menus

Vegetarian

- Spaghetti with Mushroom-Tomato-Asiago Cheese Sauce
- Steamed Green Beans with Pine Nuts
- Fruit Salad

Vegan

- Roasted Vegetables with Whole Wheat Pasta
- Green Salad
- Sliced Apples

ARE YOU READY TO LOSE WEIGHT?

- Have you chosen a way of eating that you can live with over the long-term?
- Have you removed tempting junk foods from your house?
- Have you told a friend or relative about your plans?
- Have you chosen a way to get exercise most days of the week?

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO GET STARTED WITH WEIGHT LOSS?

First, answer the questions above. Think about what works for your family or the people you live with. Then, meet with a registered dietitian for personalized advice. Seeing a dietitian will help you reach your weight-loss goals. If you have a medical condition, be sure to check with your doctor before starting any kind of diet or exercise program.

HOW CAN I KEEP THE WEIGHT OFF?

Once you've lost weight, try these quick tips to keep the weight off:

- Stay physically active
- Keep food portions in check

- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and some whole grains for fiber
- Limit animal fat and use small amounts of healthier fats such as olive oil
- Choose chicken and fish more often than red meat, and limit serving size to the palm of your hand
- Eat breakfast almost every day
- Include splurge or treat foods occasionally
- Check your weight regularly

Questions to ask your doctor

- Do I need to lose weight? How much?
- What health problems might I develop if I don't lose weight?
- What are my options for diets?
- What are the risks and benefits of these diets?
- How long will it take for me to lose the weight?
- Should I see a registered dietitian?

RESOURCES

- Find-an-Endocrinologist: www.hormone.org or call 1-800-HORMONE (1-800-467-6663)
- Find a registered dietitian (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics): www.eatright.org/programs/rdfinder
- Weight-control Information Network (National Institutes of Health): <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/>
- MedlinePlus information about vegetarian diets: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/vegetariandiet.html
- Information from Mayo Clinic about weight-loss diets: www.mayoclinic.com/health/weight-loss/NU00616
- Fitsmi online group coaching and free resources for teen girls and parents of overweight kids: www.fitsmi.com; <http://fitsmiparentcoaching.com>

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The Hormone Health Network offers free, online resources based on the most advanced clinical and scientific knowledge from the Endocrine Society (www.endocrine.org). The Network's goal is to move patients from educated to engaged, from informed to active partners in their health care. This fact sheet is also available in Spanish at www.hormone.org/audiencias/pacientes-y-cuidadores.

