

doctor's orders: 5 guidelines for lasting results

life-long approaches: look for life-long approaches to healthy eating and avoid "dieting," which is only a temporary solution.

avoid restrictive diets: avoid diets that are too restrictive and eliminate important vitamins, minerals, and nutrients.

nutritionally-balanced diet: strive to achieve a nutritionally-balanced diet with healthy foods from each food group.

healthy weight: achieve a healthy weight with a calorically-balanced diet and routine exercise.

plant-based diets: plant-based diets are best for health and longevity. make fruits, vegetables, and whole grains your diet mainstay.

side-by-side comparisons

vegan diet

theory/concept: eliminates all animal products including meat, fish, poultry, dairy, and eggs.

caffeine?: in moderation

alcohol?: avoid alcoholic drinks that are clarified using animal-derived substances.

length of diet?: life-long

cost?: average

health pros:

may decrease heart disease

generally lower in saturated fat

high in fiber if eating lots of fruits and vegetables

health cons:

need to be diligent in meeting nutritional requirements, particularly iron, b-12, zinc, vitamin d, and omega-3s.

doctor's final say: studies have shown that a plant-based diet is the best for health and longevity. requires diligence in keeping up with enough fruits, veggies, and supplements.

paleo diet

theory/concept: replaces dairy and grain products with free-range meat, fresh fruits, and vegetables. usually 65% animal-based and 35% plant-based.

caffeine?: in moderation

alcohol?: in moderation (avoid grain-based alcohol)

length of diet?: life-long

cost?: high

health pros:

more fruits and vegetables

cuts out added sugar and sodium

combination of plant-based foods and protein can help control blood sugar, maintain weight loss

health cons:

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.

doctor's final say: paleo eliminates a significant amount of healthy vitamins and minerals. could be helpful for a patient trying to "detox" from a high carbohydrate or sugar diet. okay, perhaps for more than 12 weeks.

vegetarian diet

theory/concept: no animal meat but includes dairy, eggs, and other products from animals.

caffeine?: in moderation

alcohol?: in moderation

length of diet?: life-long

cost?: average

health pros:

may decrease heart disease

generally lower in saturated fat

emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and non-meat protein sources

high in fiber if eating lots of fruits and vegetables

health cons:

need to be diligent in meeting nutritional requirements, particularly iron, b-12, zinc, vitamin d, and omega-3s.

doctor's final say: this is a healthy diet strategy, as plant-based diets are the healthiest.

atkins diet

theory/concept: cuts carbohydrates.

caffeine?: none initially. in moderation after 2 weeks.

alcohol?: none initially. in moderation after 2 weeks.

length of diet?: phase one (the most restrictive) lasts two weeks. the rest of the diet lasts as long as it takes to lose weight.

cost?: high

health pros:

less refined sugar, white rice/flour = fewer 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.

health cons:

may be too restricted in carbohydrates

too much protein can harm people prone to kidney issues

doctor's final say: 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 atkins diet is hard to maintain.

zone diet

theory/concept: a small amount of protein (approximately the size of your palm) with "favorable" carbs twice the size of the protein portion.

caffeine?: no

alcohol?: in moderation

length of diet?: life-long

cost?: average if cooking yourself. can be expensive with meal-delivery services.

health pros:

portion-controlled serving of protein with lots of fruits and vegetables can lead to nutrients

emphasizes heart-healthy monounsaturated fats

health cons:

may be too restricted in carbohydrates

too much protein can harm people prone to kidney issues

doctor's final say: healthy diet, high protein intake. can be used as a long-term diet.