

# Popular Diets, Which One Is Right For You?

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This day and age, picking a diet plan can feel very unnerving when there are so many out there to choose from. This article will hopefully help you make a smart decision, and possibly help you make a few positive diet changes that you can keep for a lifetime. Here are a few things to consider when choosing a diet plan...

- Is it Simple to follow for you, or is it overwhelming? Try not to confuse simple with easy! More on this below.
- Is it Sustainable for you, or is it a short term fix? Will you be able to stick with it for at least three months? I highly encourage people to focus on lifestyle changes as opposed to a diet, however, sometimes a person needs a “jump start” in order to get them moving in the right direction for the long term. I feel like three months is an appropriate amount of time to stick with an initial diet, and then a more relaxed approach can be implemented. As long as you feel you have learned something from your jump start, and can carry a few things into a lifestyle change, going on a diet is perfectly fine.
- Does it contain things You Enjoy, or will you be gagging on your food all the time? I believe people should like the

foods they are eating for the most part when following a diet plan, however, I do encourage them to try new foods and foods they may have not liked in the past. Attempt new cooking methods and new ways to incorporate foods you may think you do not like.

- Does it Make Sense for your lifestyle, or will you need to do a complete 180? For instance, if you’re a super social person and go out to eat a lot, a diet that includes a lot of food restrictions may not be the best choice for you.
- Does it Cut Out major food groups? This is typically unsustainable, but there are a few exceptions... lactose intolerance and dairy, celiac disease and gluten, and vegetarianism and meat. Be aware, if you pull something out completely, you may never be able to go back to eating it again due to severe digestive distress.
- One last thing to think about “Is doing this diet something I may regret?” This is most certainly open to interpretation.

So, which one is right for you? I am going to list 10 popular diets, go into a little bit of detail on each, the pros and cons, and to whom each diet may work for the best.

## 10 popular diets right now...



### Ketogenic

- Very low carbohydrate, 20 grams or less, usually about 5% total calories.
- Very high fat, about 70% of total calories.
- Moderate protein, about 25% total calories.
- Very similar to Atkins.
- **Pros:** rapid initial weight loss, may improve blood sugar levels, allows for almost unlimited fat choices.
- **Cons:** very restrictive on carbs, may decrease energy initially, tough to stick with long term.
- **Best for:** those who need rapid weight loss, those who have a flexible lifestyle, those who are not highly active, those who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, or epilepsy.



### Calorie restriction

- Very low calorie and typically low fat.
- Sufficient amounts of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients need to be taken in.
- **Pros:** been proven to increase lifespan, shown to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, very few restrictions (if any) on fruits, vegetables, legumes, and grains.
- **Cons:** a lot of planning may be required to insure micronutrients are adequate everyday, diet may be deficient in essential fatty acids, may be hungry often.
- **Best for:** those who prefer eating plant-based, those who need to decrease cholesterol and blood pressure fast, those who don’t like fatty cuts of meat and poultry.



### Intermittent fasting

- At least 12 hours of no eating everyday.
- OR, 16 hours of no eating 2-3 times a week. Some may do this everyday.
- Overall calories should be decreased due to fasting periods.
- **Pros:** no restrictions on foods, gives the gut a rest, shown to improve brain function.
- **Cons:** may be tough to execute initially due to changing of eating hours, may promote binging, may not be in calorie deficit even though eating hours have been cut down.
- **Best for:** those who prefer to skip breakfast and/or prefer eating less often, those who don’t want any food group restrictions, those who don’t have a very flexible lifestyle.



### Whole 30

- 30 day diet
- Eliminates sugar, alcohol, grains, legumes, dairy, and soy.
- **Pros:** whole/unprocessed food based, vegetables are almost unlimited, shown to improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Cons:** very restrictive and may be very tough to execute for some, some may become intolerant to certain foods they’ve cut out during the 30 day period.
- **Best for:** those who have gluten and/or dairy intolerances, those with a flexible lifestyle, those who do not go out to eat a lot.



### Mediterranean

- Based on traditional cuisine of countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea
- High in fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts/seeds, olive oil, and fish.
- Moderate dairy intake.
- Limit red meat.
- **Pros:** very nutrient dense, limits but doesn’t cut out foods/food groups, allows for alcohol consumption especially red wine, shown to reduce cholesterol and risk of heart disease.
- **Cons:** may not produce rapid weight loss, still need to focus on calories to see results, may encourage people to increase wine consumption which can drastically increase calories if not tracked carefully.
- **Best for:** those who enjoy fatty fish like salmon, those you don’t really like red meat, those who enjoy lots of fruits and vegetables on a daily basis.





### Paleolithic

- Based on foods people ate in the past to which they've obtained through hunting and gathering.
- Limits foods that became common when farming became popular.
- No dairy, legumes, and grains.
- Very similar to Whole 30, but there is no time period attached to it.
- **Pros:** whole/unprocessed food based, vegetables are almost unlimited, shown to improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Cons:** pretty restrictive, may be very tough to stick with for long term, some may become intolerant to certain foods they've cut out.
- **Best for:** those who have gluten and/or dairy intolerances, those with a flexible lifestyle, those who like to eat meat at most meals.



### The Zone

- Based on a macronutrient breakdown of 40% carbohydrates, 30% protein, 30% fat.
- Carbohydrate choices should have a low glycemic index.
- Lean proteins.
- Mostly monounsaturated fats.
- **Pros:** no food group restrictions, some people can do a simplified version using the Plate Method, easier to stick with for the long term compared to some other diets once you get the hang of it.
- **Cons:** a lot of tracking and counting required initially, typically doesn't produce super fast results, may be difficult when eating out.
- **Best for:** those who have time to track their macronutrients, those who do not want to cut out food groups, those who don't have a lot of weight to lose initially and are looking for more of a lifestyle change.



### Weight Watchers

- Uses a point system to track calories.
- Based on age, weight, height, gender, and activity level.
- **Pros:** very flexible, personalized to each individual, fairly simple to execute.
- **Cons:** may not account for micronutrient levels on a daily basis, point tracking may be overwhelming for some, cost may be prohibitive for some.
- **Best for:** those who don't want a lot of structure, those who enjoy tracking, those who eat out a lot.

## Two diets that have become popular in the bodybuilding industry...



### Macro-based

- Specific number of grams for each macronutrient, based on individual goals.
- **Pros:** very flexible, can be very specific to each individual and macros can change depending on current needs/goals, typically no foods are excluded.
- **Cons:** a lot of tracking and counting, sometimes people include very nutrient-poor foods, sometimes people can become obsessive about their macro counts and it may be tough to break the cycle.



### Clean-eating

- Based on a specified number of foods that are considered "clean."
- Small, frequent meals throughout the day.
- **Pros:** based on whole/unprocessed foods, can be very nutrient-dense if the variety of foods is fairly high, usually high in protein which is good for muscle growth/maintenance.
- **Cons:** people tend to eat the same foods over and over again for convenience, people may become afraid to eat foods that aren't considered "clean," may not produce weight loss due to not counting overall calories.

## Other notable mentions...



- **Vegan** - eliminates all animal products, including honey. Biggest challenge: getting enough protein and certain vitamins, like D and B12.
- **Carnivore** - only eat animals and animal products. Biggest downside: very hard to maintain, super restrictive, no fruits, vegetables, legumes, or grains.
- **Cleanses** - liquid diet for a certain amount of days/weeks. Biggest criticism: super short term solution, weight loss is mostly water.

Along with all diets, it is very important to focus on hydration as well, especially if the diet is high in protein. A good rule of thumb for hydration... your urine should be a pale yellow color. Clear urine means too much water, dark yellow or orange/brown urine means too little water.

So what do most diets have in common? They put you in a calorie deficit, Plain and Simple. Again, simple is not the same thing as easy... so, what is the difference?

### Simple plans can be tough to execute.

What seems very simple to one person, may at the same time be very challenging for them to execute due to work, family, and other daily obligations. I would say most diet plans are fairly simple to understand, yet may be super difficult for some put into motion, especially on a consistent basis. And most fad diets should be followed consistently for results to happen. In my experience, both personal and working with clients, diets that work for the long haul have a few things in common. Typically, what needs to happen is 1) calories need to be lowered and 2) exercise needs to be increased. And usually just a little bit of both, depending on where the person is starting. A few other things to consider are 1) make sure protein is adequate for muscle growth/maintenance 2) make sure carbs and fat are not cut down too low 3) try not to cut out major food groups. The main driver of fat loss is being in a calorie deficit, plain and SIMPLE. In conclusion, the diet that is best for you is the one that you can stick with for at least three months and then gradually transform it into a lifestyle, one in which you enjoy the majority of the foods, and one that doesn't completely rearrange your current life.