

5 Diets Dissected: Find the Right One for You

Considering a meal plan makeover? Here's a breakdown of five popular diets. Always talk with your health care provider before beginning any new diet or meal plan to find the best fit for your health goals.

1. Paleolithic (Paleo)

Food focus: Vegetables, fruits, meats, eggs, fish and berries (foods available 10,000 years ago), but not grains, legumes, salt, sugar or dairy

Audience/health benefit: May help prevent type 2 diabetes and control blood sugar

Drawback: May exclude foods that contain important vitamins and minerals

2. Ketogenic (Keto)

Food focus: High-fat, low-carb foods like avocados, nuts, seeds, butter, meats, fish and oils; eliminates grains and limits fruits and vegetables

Audience/health benefit: Originally developed to manage epilepsy; burns fat for energy, may accelerate weight loss

Drawback: Hard to follow for an extended period of time and can include unhealthy, processed foods

3. Vegan

Food focus: Vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, soy and seeds—no animal products

Audience/health benefit: Reduces risk for obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes

Drawback: Can cause nutrient deficiencies

4. Mediterranean

Food focus: Fish, shellfish, healthy fats, nuts, fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains

Audience/health benefit: Heart-healthy; may prevent cognitive decline and lower risk of developing breast cancer

Drawback: Potential danger of eating too much fish that contains high mercury levels, like swordfish or orange roughy

5. Gluten-Free

Food focus: Avoid foods that contain any form of wheat, rye or barley

Audience/health benefit: Necessary for those who have celiac disease or a gluten intolerance

Drawback: May eliminate essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, such as fiber, iron, calcium and vitamin B



Sources include the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Disorders and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.