

Popular Diets: Are they effective?

Nutrient Based Eating Styles

High Protein Usually = High Fat

Moderate Low Fat Eating

High Carbohydrate, Very Low Fat Diets

Heart Smart Related Diets

NUTRIENT BASED EATING STYLES

40-30-30, 55-15-30, and 65-15-15. No, these are not good picks for the lottery, they are number sequences that represent some popular combinations of the proportion of carbohydrate to protein to fat in an "ideal" diet. There is no perfect, one-size-fits-all recommendation for how to choose food by the numbers.

HIGH PROTEIN USUALLY = HIGH FAT

Men love high protein diets. These eating plans grant permission to chow down on beefy steaks and drink beer. Minnesota Vikings Football coach Dennis Green's high protein diet gained such local acclaim that Minnesota grocery stores started stocking pork rinds. Customers were demanding the never-before-stocked snack item

because "Denny eats it." Pork rinds are big on Green's "high protein diet" and he loved sharing how much he enjoyed eating these grease-laden globs of pig skin.

The American College of Sports Medicine, the American Dietetic Association, the Women's Sports Foundation and the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research have released a joint statement saying that high-protein plans are neither the answer for weight loss nor for athletic performance and can cause harm. Here's their reasons:

- high protein plans usually recommend 40% of calories from carbohydrates, 30% from protein and 30% from fat - this provides a diet inadequate in some major nutrients, particularly carbohydrates.

- they do help some people lose weight, only because it provides so few calories.
- protein should only make up 10 to 15% of calories per day.

The health and diet aisle of your local bookstore is chock full of titles such as Protein Power, The Zone, Healthy for Life, The 5 Day Miracle Diet, and Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution, all featuring protein-powered diets. Such diets have a decidedly familiar ring. They are making a comeback from their heyday in the 1970's. But people won't lose weight for good now, any more than they did then. These "new" high protein diets are the same old bad news.

Following such an eating plan can result in an immediate and dramatic loss of body fluid. It's rewarding to see the pounds drop quickly at first, but most dieters think they've lost body fat - not just water. The build-up of ketones caused by high protein diets can cause fatigue, weakness, headache, irritability, bad breath, dehydration and kidney trouble. Ketogenic diets are especially dangerous for older people or those with untreated diabetes.

Here's a quick run down on the current best-selling high protein fad diets:

- **Dr. Atkins' New Diet**

Revolution: The original high-protein diet guru continues to rehash his high-protein, relatively high-fat diet with carbohydrate levels ranging from a meager 15 grams (one serving of fruit, bread, rice or pasta) to a barely adequate 60 grams a day for beginning dieters.

- **The 5 Day Miracle Diet**, by Adelle Puhn, is a bit more generous with carbohydrates, but not much. Women are advised to eat starchy vegetables, potatoes or beans only on alternate days - either for lunch or dinner, but not both. What about pasta? Not more than twice a week and only at dinner. Why? Beats us.

- The diet in Barry Sears' **The Zone** is referred to as "40-30-30" by those in the know. This is still considerably more protein (two to three times) and less carbohydrate, than most nutritionists recommend. However, you're unlikely to experience a buildup of ketones on this diet.

So what's the alternative? While it may not be a hot new trend, but eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains along with

moderate amounts of lean meats and low-fat dairy foods, and coupled with regular physical activity, is the safest, surest bet for keeping off unwanted pounds.

MODERATE LOW FAT EATING

Americans are eating fewer calories from fat, but that may not be all good news. Many people are just replacing high-fat diets with diets heavy in processed carbohydrates - low fat chips, cookies and other snack foods. What you need to do is eat more fruits and vegetables containing beneficial nutrients. Today's focus on the 30% of calories from fat has failed to help most people make better food choices. Fat is just one factor to review on a food label. If a food is fat free, but also devoid of any other nutrient it offers no positive benefit. The proliferation of fat free and low fat products has offered more opportunity to eat poorly.

HIGH CARBOHYDRATE, VERY LOW FAT DIETS

The Pritikin diet is perhaps the best example of severe fat restriction. At 15% of calories from fat these diets are very difficult to follow because variety and amounts of many foods and food groups are severely

restricted. There is no dispute that for some, this combination of foods can actually stop or reverse symptoms of heart disease in some people. This eating style is great for some, but not to be recommended as an overall healthy diet. Why? Studies in progress are helping to explain why not everyone reduces their risk for heart disease by going on low fat diets. The answers aren't all in yet. But, according to nutrition and obesity expert C. Wayne Calloway, M.D., one-fourth of the US population develops insulin resistance on these high-carbohydrate diets - a condition that frequently leads to diabetes. "The trend for the future is more targeted dietary prescriptions for individuals, not one-size-fits-all diets," says Calloway.

HEART SMART RELATED DIETS

Step 1 Diet. Designed by the National Cholesterol Education Program as the first step in treating high blood cholesterol. This low-fat plan (30 percent of total calories/day) restricts saturated fat (8 to 10 percent of total calories/day) and dietary cholesterol (less than 300 mg/day), and provides enough calories to achieve or maintain a healthy weight. If blood cholesterol levels

aren't lowered in three to six months, the Step II Diet should be tried.

Step II Diet. A more restrictive version of the Step I diet. Saturated Fat is kept to less than 7 percent of total calories/day, and dietary cholesterol is held at 200 mg/day. If these dietary changes don't result in lower blood cholesterol, then medications may be prescribed.

Ornish Diet. Developed in the late 1970's by Dr. Dean Ornish. It is a very low-fat vegetarian way of eating with less than 10 percent of calories from fat. The focus is on beans, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, with processed foods and nonfat dairy products recommended in moderation. This breaks down to roughly 15 to 25 grams of fat/day for the average person. Dr. Ornish claims he can even reverse severe heart disease without drugs or surgery. As with the Pritikin Diet, many people find the severe fat limitations a challenge to stick with.

The DASH Diet. This eating plan is from the "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension" (DASH) clinical study. The research was funded by the National

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[http://www.fatfree.com/](http://www.fatfree.com/diets/ornish.html)

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for more details.

Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), with additional support by the National Center for Research Resources and the Office of Research on Minority Health, all units of the National Institutes of Health. DASH's final results appear in the April 17, 1997, issue of The New England Journal of Medicine. The results show that the DASH "combination diet" lowered blood pressure and, so, may help prevent and control high blood pressure. Widespread adoption of the DASH diet is estimated to

be able to reduce heart disease by 15 percent and stroke by 27 percent.

The "combination diet" is rich in fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods, and low in saturated and total fat. It also is low in cholesterol, high in dietary fiber, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, and moderately high in protein.

REFERENCE

Busch F. The New Nutrition: From Antioxidants to Zucchini. John Wiley & Sons. New York, NY. 2000

A recommended DASH diet

8-10 servings of fruits and vegetables/day

2-3 servings of low-fat dairy foods

7-8 servings of grains/day

up to 2 servings of lean meat/day

4-5 servings of nuts, seeds, and beans each week.