

Fad diets have been around for decades. New ones surface regularly while some older weight-loss solutions fall in and out of popularity.

Popularized by the promise of quick and dramatic weight-loss results, fad diets need to be fully researched before trying.

Fad Diets: What's all the Hype About?

Learn to Recognize Fad Diets:

By the time you read this, there may already be a new best-selling fad diet book out on the market. Fad diets come and go, but can generally be defined as a weight-loss plan or aid that promises dramatic results. Generally, diets or diet products can be considered fad if they fit any of the criteria below:

1. Claiming to help you lose weight very quickly, more than 1-2 pounds per week.
2. Promising you will lose weight and keep it off without giving up fatty foods or starting an exercise program.
3. Basing their claims only on "before and after" photos.
4. Offering testimonies from clients or "experts" in weight loss, science or nutrition who are usually being paid to promote the diet plan.
5. Drawing simple solutions from complex medical research.
6. Limiting food choices and not encouraging you to get balanced nutrition by eating a variety of foods.
7. Requiring you to spend a lot of money on such things as seminars, pills or prepackaged meals in order for the plan to work.

The following pages explain and compare some of the most popular diet programs available today. With so many available, understanding which may be the right fit for you can be overwhelming. Contact a health care professional before drastically changing your diet, exercise or weight-loss plan.

The Atkins Diet Overview:

Atkins provides a series of dietary phases. The first phase is called the "Induction" Phase and it's during these 14 days dieters are to follow detailed instructions exactly. The point of this phase is to kick-start the body into lipolysis/ketosis, during which the metabolism can be switched to one that primarily burns fat for energy.

During Phase Two, the diet becomes less restrictive and more appetizing mainly by increasing the allowable vegetables and raising carbohydrate levels. When dieters approach their weight goal, they establish their "critical carbohydrate level" for maintenance, which is the highest number of grams of carbohydrates per day they can eat, without beginning to gain back their lost weight.

Eating options for Atkins dieters places no limit on the amount of saturated-fat-laden products, such as meat, cheese, eggs, butter and oils consumed each day. Large amounts of these foods are advocated and encouraged, without the need to count calories or exercise.

A limited amount of carbohydrates can be introduced in Phase Two, but Atkins dieters should still deter from eating bread, potatoes, pasta and sweets. Fruit and dairy are also extremely limited.

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The South Beach Diet Overview:

South Beach is described as “neither low-fat nor low-carbohydrate,” but rather a method that teaches dieters to rely on the “right” carbohydrates and the “right” fats.

Similar to Atkins, this plan is divided into phases. Phase One lasts 14 days and is the most restrictive by completely eliminating fruit, bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, sugar, alcohol, fast food and baked goods from the diet. Its goal is to promote eating three meals a day so that dieters aren't left feeling hungry and cravings for starches and sweets are eliminated. Phase Two allows gradual reintroductions of foods like pasta, bread, fruit and cereal, although dieters can't eat them all at once or in excess. Phase Two lasts until dieters reach their weight-loss goal and are ready to move into Phase Three, which is all about maintenance, and is considered more of a "way of life," than a phase.

Eating options for South Beach dieters include avoiding highly processed carbohydrates found in baked goods, breads, snacks and soft drinks, as well as being cautioned against low-fat prepared foods, which only replaces fats with carbohydrates. To compensate for the overall cut in carbohydrates, South Beach dieters are allowed ample fats and animal proteins in meals such as chicken, turkey and fish, along with nuts, milk, cheeses and yogurt.

Also similar to Atkins, exercise and calorie counting are not required to lose weight with the South Beach diet.

The Cabbage Soup Diet Overview:

The Cabbage Soup Diet has many variations, but they all basically involve eating endless amounts of cabbage soup that are supplemented by the occasional fruit or vegetable. The Cabbage Soup Diet is not sustainable and should not be followed for more than a week at a time, but tends to entice people because of its guarantee that the dieter will lose 10 pounds in one week.

Here's one form of the Cabbage Soup Diet, day by day:

- Day 1: Eat as much fruit as you want (except bananas) and as much cabbage soup as you want. To drink, have unsweetened teas, cranberry juice or water.
- Day 2: Eat as many fresh, raw or cooked vegetables as you want (aim for leafy, green veggies and avoid dry beans, peas and corn) and as much cabbage soup as you want. For dinner, also eat a large baked potato with butter. Do not eat fruit.
- Day 3: Eat all the cabbage soup, fruits and vegetables you want, but do not eat a baked potato.
- Day 4: Eat up to eight bananas and drink as much skim milk as you want. Also have as much cabbage soup as you want.
- Day 5: Eat 10 to 20 ounces of beef and up to six fresh tomatoes. Drink at least six to eight glasses of water, and eat cabbage soup at least once.
- Day 6: Eat as much beef and vegetables as you want, but no baked potato. Eat cabbage soup at least once.
- Day 7: Eat as much brown rice, unsweetened fruit juices and vegetables as you want, and eat cabbage soup at least once.

While there are many variations of this diet, the diet itself is not customized for each person. Regardless of your weight-loss goals, your body type or even your starting weight, each person's diet plan looks the same. While good for shedding a few extra pounds quickly, this diet is not a long-term plan.

Dr. Phil Diet – The Shape Up! Plan Overview:

The Shape Up! Plan is characterized as a balanced approach to weight management, consisting of high fiber foods—including complex carbohydrates, whole grains, fruits and vegetables—balanced with lean protein and healthy fats.

The plan emphasizes seven key points:

1. Right thinking for self-control
2. Healing feelings, the key to emotional control
3. No-fail environment
4. Mastery over food and impulse eating
5. High-response cost, high-yield nutrition
6. Intentional exercise

**If a diet
sounds too
good to be
true, chances
are it is.**



7. Your circle of support

A main principle of this plan is the “high-response cost, high-yield foods” concept. According to Dr. Phil, this means that a sunflower seed is a more ideal food because several steps must be taken before calories are actually ingested whereas a bean burrito with sour cream is easily eaten with minimal effort.

The plan urges dieters to watch their portion sizes, load up on foods that are high in nutrients and fiber, and choose foods that take some work to consume such as broccoli, shelled peanuts and fish. Also, Shape Up! recommends and encourages vigorous exercise for 20 minutes, at least three times a week.

No food is forbidden, but fast food and food that is easily consumed should be avoided or significantly reduced. In addition, the plan recommends keeping troublesome foods, such as cookies and potato chips, off the shopping list and replaced by veggies and other healthy snacks.

Resources available:

For more information on these fad diets and more, refer to the recommended links below:

The American Dietetic Association (ADA): www.eatright.org/Public

With nearly 70,000 members, the American Dietetic Association is the nation’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals promoting optimal nutrition, health and well-being.

The USDA’s My Plate: www.choosemyplate.gov

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, an organization of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was established in 1994 to improve the nutrition and well-being of Americans.

The American Heart Association (AHA): www.americanheart.org

The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is: "Building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke." This website also has plenty of tips for healthy eating habits.