

Editorial

Healthy Diet Trends in Recent Years

A healthy lifestyle is about making little changes that make a big difference. It's not about being perfect or having zero fun. Eating healthy can be doable with the diets if one has the right mindset. A healthy diet helps to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, as well as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Energy intake (calories) should be in balance with energy expenditure. To avoid unhealthy weight gain, total fat should not exceed 30% of total energy intake.^{1, 2, 3} Intake of saturated fats should be less than 10% of total energy intake and intake of trans-fats less than 1% of total energy intake, with a shift in fat consumption away from saturated fats and trans-fats to unsaturated fats³ and towards the goal of eliminating industrially-produced trans-fat.^{4, 5, 6}

Limiting intake of free sugars to less than 10% of total energy intake is part of a healthy diet. A further reduction to less than 5% of total energy intake is suggested for additional health benefits.⁷

Keeping salt intake to less than 5 g per day (equivalent to sodium intake of less than 2 g per day) helps to prevent hypertension, and reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke in the adult population.⁸

WHO Member States have agreed to reduce the global population's intake of salt by 30% by 2025; they have also agreed to halt the rise in diabetes and obesity in adults and adolescents as well as in childhood overweight by 2025.^{9, 10}

The National Institute of Health claims a 22-year study showed that people who ate a healthy diet lived an average of seven years longer than those who didn't. So, let's see the list of healthy diet trends for 2024.¹¹ Often including weight loss resolutions it seems to be hard to keep up with different diet trends, but following are all covered. Now the trend is not only to ensure weight off but also to add years in our life.

1. The Keto Diet

It is a high-fat, low-carb diet that was originally

developed as a treatment for epilepsy in the 1920s and is now used for weight loss and various health benefits.

The main idea behind the keto diet is to reduce carbohydrate intake to a very low level and replace it with fat. This process forces our body into a state called ketosis, which is when our body starts burning fat instead of carbohydrates for energy.

The benefits of a ketogenic diet are vast and include weight loss, improved energy levels, better mental clarity, and decreased risk of certain chronic diseases. But it can be very restrictive in terms of food choices. Additionally, it is important to follow the diet correctly and to ensure getting all the necessary vitamins and minerals from other sources such as supplements.¹²

The ketogenic diet which is still popular is being tweaked. Health experts are now recommending a moderate amount of carbohydrates, as well as protein. This may prevent short-term side effects of KD referred to as "keto flu," which encompasses symptoms including fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and low exercise tolerance. Long-term side effects include hepatic steatosis, kidney stones, hypoproteinemia, and vitamin deficiency.¹³

2. The Paleo Diet

The Paleo diet (Paleolithic Era 2.5 Million - 10,000 yrs ago) is based on the idea of eating like our ancestors did. It focuses on a diet of whole foods, including vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and lean proteins such as fish and poultry. The basis of the diet is that our bodies are best suited to eat what we have been evolved to eat over thousands of years.

It has been linked to reducing inflammation, promoting weight loss, increasing energy levels, improving mental clarity, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

Some of the foods allowed on the Paleo diet include: grass-fed meats, wild-caught seafood, eggs, nuts and seeds, non-starchy vegetables, low-sugar fruits, and healthy fats such as olive oil, coconut oil, and avocado

oil. Foods to avoid on this diet include processed grains and refined sugars, dairy products, legumes, and most processed foods.

3. The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean Diet is based on the traditional eating habits of countries around the Mediterranean Sea, such as Spain, Italy, Greece, and Morocco. It focuses on consuming whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, olive oil, and whole grains. The diet also incorporates moderate amounts of fish, eggs, poultry, and dairy products.

One of the main benefits of the Mediterranean Diet is its emphasis on healthy fats like monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids found in olive oil, nuts, and avocados. These are known to reduce inflammation and help lower your risk of heart disease. Additionally, the diet emphasizes plant-based foods that are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, all of which can improve overall health.

Overall, the Mediterranean Diet is a great option for those looking to improve their health and wellness while still enjoying their food. It provides a wide range of nutritional benefits while still allowing for flexibility.

4. The Vegan Diet

The vegan diet is based on the principle of avoiding animal-derived products such as meat, dairy, eggs, and other animal-derived ingredients, instead opting for plant-based foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and grains.

It is high in fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals, which can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and certain types of cancer. Additionally, research suggests that a vegan diet may help reduce inflammation in the body and improve mental health.

In addition to the health benefits of a vegan diet, it is also much more sustainable than diets based on animal products. According to the United Nations, livestock production accounts for 14.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Eating a vegan diet eliminates this contribution to climate change and can help protect our planet.¹²

5. The DASH diet- This is a Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension and also to lose weight. It includes lots of fruits, vegetables, grains and low-fat dairy products

with limited amounts of lean meat, poultry and fish. Being high in potassium and magnesium, the DASH diet is low in sodium.

5. MIND - It stands for the Mediterranean-DASH intervention for neurodegenerative delay. It is a hybrid of the Mediterranean diet and DASH diet. Research suggests it may reduce the risk of developing dementia or slow the decline in brain health.¹⁴

6. The Intermittent Fasting Diet

This involves periods of fasting and eating within a specified time frame. There are several different methods of Intermittent Fasting, including the 5:2 diet, which involves eating normally for five days and restricting calories to 500-600 calories for two non-consecutive days. Another popular method is the 16/8 diet, which involves fasting for 16 hours a day and eating all meals within an 8-hour window.

Intermittent Fasting cite numerous potential health benefits, such as weight loss, improved mental clarity, increased energy, better digestion, and improved insulin sensitivity. Additionally, Intermittent Fasting may help to improve cardiovascular health and reduce inflammation in the body.

When it comes to the actual process of Intermittent Fasting, it is important to ensure that one's calorie intake is still healthy and nutritious. It is also important to take breaks if needed.¹²

7. Flexitarian Diet- A flexitarian or semi-vegetarian diet (SVD) is one that is primarily vegetarian with the occasional inclusion of meat or fish. So, flexitarian is a portmanteau of "flexible" and "vegetarian." The FD seems to recognize the fact that meat is an important source of protein, fat, and micronutrients, yet also considers the ethical sides, such as the need to avoid intensification and improve animal welfare. It also considers evidence that long-term consumption of increasing amounts of red meat and particularly processed meat may increase the risk of mortality, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain forms of cancer such as colon cancer. Recently, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified red meat and processed meat as probable carcinogenic to humans¹⁵

This diet can be started by adding plants to every meal to start - at least 2 cups per meal, equivalent to half of the plate. Selection of one meal a day that can easily be replace animal products with plants. For example, switch out of eggs and sausages with hearty

oatmeal topped with chia seeds and berries for breakfast. For lunch, opt for a salad with beans instead of chicken.¹⁶

Ultimately, it is important to consult with a doctor or registered dietitian before trying out any new diet. It is important to understand the potential benefits and risks associated with any type of diet before trying it out.

Previous years the rise of diets like “veganism” and “paleo” both were viewed as a healthy life style but considered disliked due to their limited food options. So, in coming years top diet trends will not only be easy to follow diet plans but they focus on our overall health and extension of healthy life rather just the number on the scale.

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