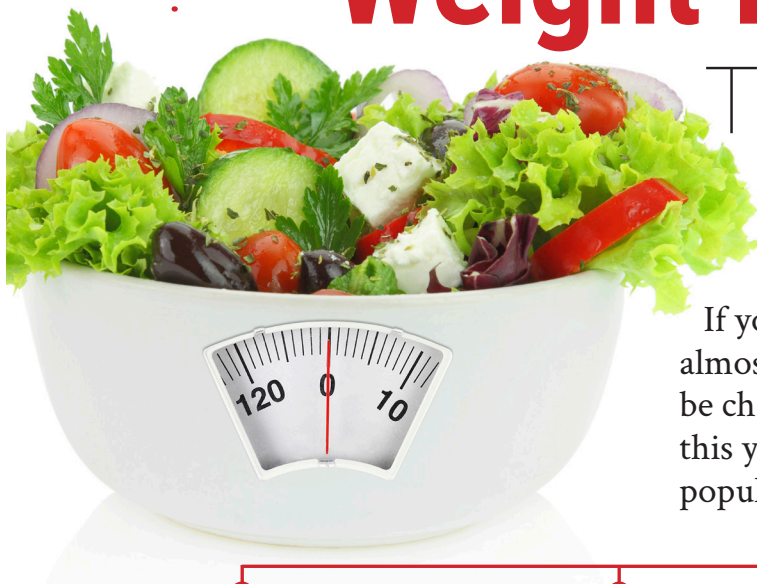


Weighing Your Weight Loss Options

The Best Diets for Your Lifestyle

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If you're looking to lose weight, your options are almost limitless, but knowing which diets work best can be challenging. To help you put your best fork forward this year, here is a quick run-down of some of the most popular diets.

ZONE DIET

This diet balances low-fat protein like skinless chicken and fish, low-glycemic vegetables and fruits (ones that don't convert easily to sugars in your body), and healthy fats like olive oil, nuts and avocado.

Pro: "The Zone will eliminate processed foods pretty reasonably," says Caroline Fornshell, a registered dietician and founder of LWell in Yorktown, Virginia.

Con: Breads and other grains are discouraged, which can challenge carb lovers.

ATKINS

The original meat-lover's diet, but with severe restrictions on carbs. The no-eat list includes pasta, breads, fruit, other grains, starchy vegetables, nuts, beans, caffeine and alcohol.

Pro: "We all know that people start on the Atkins diet and get ketosis, and they drop a ton of weight," says Fornshell. **Con:** Because it's so restrictive, there's a danger of not enough nutrients and fiber in your diet.

WEIGHT WATCHERS

Eat whatever you want, as long as you don't exceed your food point allowance. Each food is assigned a point value, with fewer points for foods that fill you up quickly than for those with empty calories.

Pro: "I love to work with my Weight Watchers drop-outs," says Fornshell, "because they really understand portion control." **Con:** The point system doesn't allow you to choose foods strategically—especially carbs.

PALEO

Fit for a cavewoman, this diet emphasizes fresh lean meats and fish, vegetables, fruits and healthy fats. Banned from the Paleo diet are processed foods, wheat, dairy and legumes like beans and peanuts.

Pros: This diet emphasizes whole foods, with lots of fruits and veggies to fill you up. **Cons:** With so many fresh ingredients, you'll find yourself spending much more time in the kitchen.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

According to Marketdata Enterprises, 108 million Americans made four to five attempts each in 2013 to lose weight, a trend fed by millions of diet books, weight loss meetings and websites.

But research showing which diets work best is limited, and not every diet has been scientifically tested. One 2014 study in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes* though, found that Weight Watchers produced consistent results after one year. Atkins and the Zone Diet also led to modest weight loss, but not for

everyone. The researchers didn't look at the Paleo diet in this study.

One of the reasons Weight Watchers may work better than other name-brand diets is that people are encouraged to exercise alongside counting points. In a 2014 study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* researchers found that people lost the most weight when they combined healthy diets with regular exercise.


Many diets that involve cutting out certain foods—such as those rich in carbs or fat—lead to short-term weight loss. But what happens after

you've met your goal? To avoid regaining the weight, you need to develop eating habits that are sustainable. One option for the long-haul is a whole foods diet which, with its emphasis on healthy cooking, is more of a lifestyle than a diet.

"The whole foods diet is not just about eliminating the food, but entertaining new foods, new flavors," says Fornshell. "Replace some of the more processed foods with whole food varieties that really tantalize your palate." 🍴


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WHICH DIET IS BEST FOR YOU?

Choosing a diet is a lot like dating. If you want the relationship to last, you need to choose one that fits your personality. Here's a quick overview of dieter types.



STRUCTURE CRAVER

With its point system, Weight Watchers is ideal for people who want everything laid out in front of them. The Zone is also structured, with the same protein-carb-fat ratio at every meal.



NATURAL AT HEART

To eat more natural while losing weight, try The Zone or Paleo diets, both of which emphasize fresh, whole foods. And once the weight is off, you can expand to a no-rules whole foods diet.



SIMPLE IS BEST

If complicated rules and tracking are not your thing, both Atkins and The Zone are fairly easy to follow. Paleo is straightforward, although extra cooking time may bump this into the realm of complicated.



TIME CRUNCHED:

If you're pressed for time, Weight Watchers may be best for you, simply because there are so many prepackaged and frozen meals available that fit the plan. Atkins has some, but not as many, ready-to-eat meals for sale, as well.