

Fad Diets: An Exploration of Recent Trends

By Catherine Jasper

Weight cycling stems from habits learned while following fad diets.¹ Instead, a balanced diet containing proteins, fats, and carbohydrates can prevent weight cycling and protect against the negative health effects of obesity.²

Ketogenic Diet³



Designed originally for the treatment of epilepsy, the Ketogenic diet (or Keto) emphasizes a 4:1 ratio of fats to carbohydrates and proteins. Common side effects include fatigue, nausea, and decreased energy. Effectiveness and weight loss are debated in the medical community.

Atkins Diet³



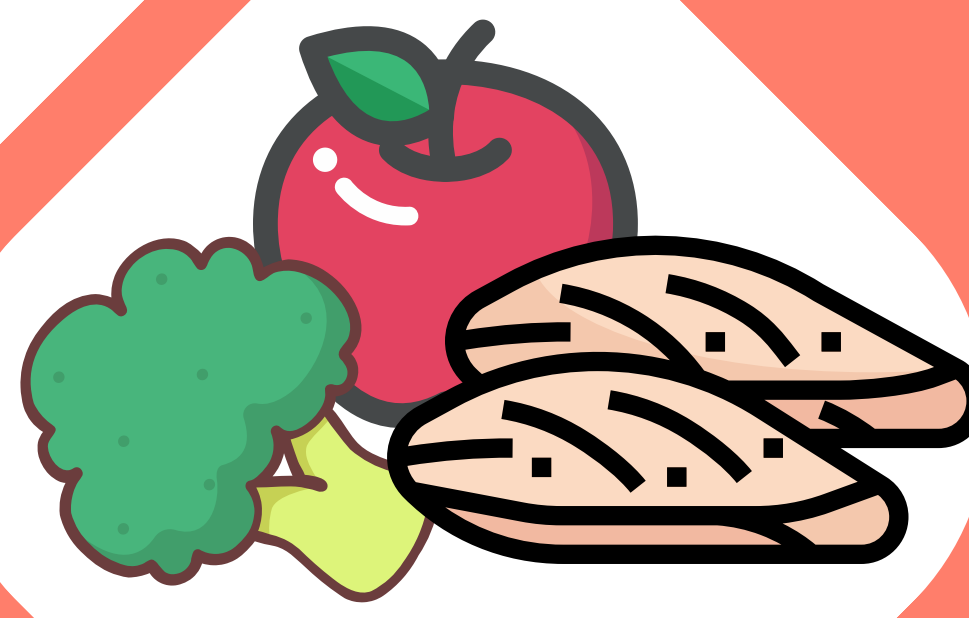
The Atkins diet is made up of four phases with an ultimate goal of <5% of caloric intake coming from carbohydrates. There is an increased risk for kidney stone formation and metabolic acidosis. Multiple studies noted significant weight loss with the Atkins Diet, but no significant difference in cardiovascular risk.

Mediterranean Diet³



Focusing on intake of whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, olive oil, fish, and nuts, the Mediterranean diet is the most studied dietary plan. There is noted significant benefit at reducing cardiovascular risk factors and maintaining weight loss, with little evidence of adverse effects.

Paleolithic Diet³



Rooted in the belief that the modern obesity problem is caused by the modern diet, this diet emphasizes unlimited intake of lean meats, non-starchy vegetables, and fruits. Dairy, legumes, and processed foods are restricted. Initial weight loss has been measured as significant, but calcium and HDL level deficiencies can also occur.

Intermittent Fasting³



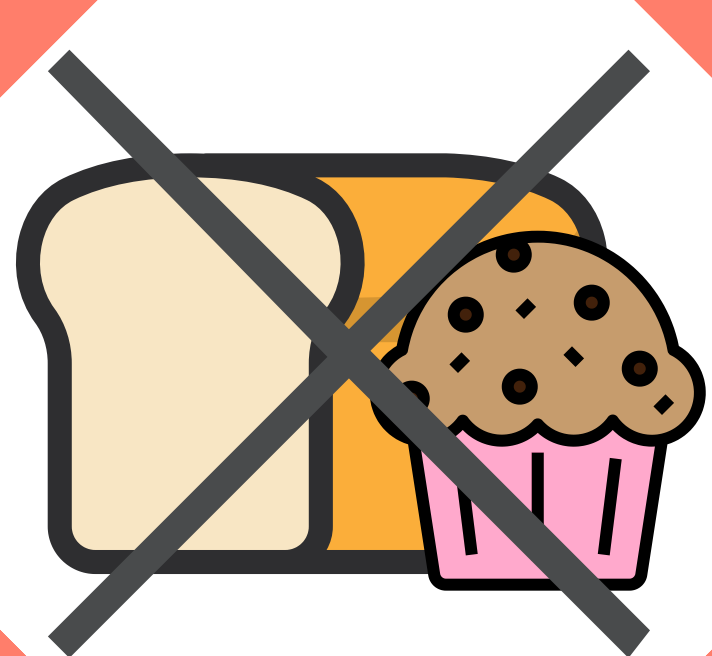
Rather than focusing on **what** a person eats, intermittent fasting places restrictions on **when** a person eats. Reductions in weight have been noted in studies comparing nighttime fasting and alternate day fasting. However, no long term studies have been conducted on the harms or benefits of intermittent fasting.

Lemon Detox Diet⁴



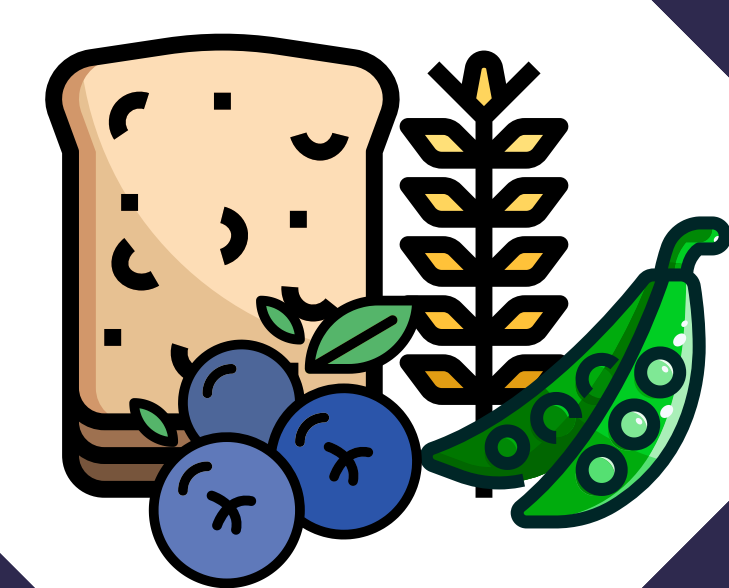
This 10-day regimen involves replacing all meals with lemon juice, water, and cayenne pepper. While this diet, and other "detox diets" like it, claims to detoxify the body and promote weight loss, controlled studies of these regimens are limited. Any short-term weight loss is likely to be immediately reversed due to the body's natural defenses against starvation.

The South Beach Diet^{5,6}



Diets like this one focus on the glycemic index and glucose spikes after consuming foods high in sugar. Instead, healthy fats such as nuts, olive oil, and fish are recommended. Following a stepwise approach to cutting refined sugars, baked goods, and processed foods from the diet noted some weight loss but were not superior to other, similar diets.

Low Fat Diet⁷



This diet is meant to restrict fats and prevent development of atherosclerotic disease, with a focus on whole grains, lean meats, fresh fruit, and vegetables. Studies confirmed a reduction in cholesterol levels, but also a lack of healthy HDL cholesterol. Weight loss comparable with other diets was noted, but no long term studies have been conducted.