

March 2019 Issue

## Navigate Your Way through the Diet Maze

Paleo, Keto, Whole 30, Vegan, Intermittent Fasting - with so many different eating plans available today, how do you decide which one is best for you?

To start, identify your goals (ie. weight loss, more energy, elimination of symptoms of food sensitivities etc.) and learn the guidelines as well as the potential benefits and risks of each plan. Consider whether a particular way of eating can be a long-term lifestyle.



Below is a brief summary of some of the most current, popular diet plans.

- **The Paleo Diet** includes vegetables, meat, seafood, eggs, fruit, nuts and seeds. Consider these as the foods that our ancestors would have been able to hunt or forage. Grains, dairy, legumes, soy, added sugar and other processed foods are to be avoided. Counting calories or macronutrients is not emphasized. You eat until you are satisfied.
- **Keto** is an extremely low-carbohydrate eating plan, with only 5 to 10 percent of your calorie intake from carbs. The remainder of your calories comes from protein (10 to 25 percent) and fat (70 to 80 percent.) This diet plan avoids all refined carbohydrates, including pasta and rice. To maintain such a low-carbohydrate intake, many nutrient-rich foods are extremely limited, including whole grains, milk, yogurt, fruit, starchy vegetables and legumes such as beans and peas.
- **Whole 30** is a strict elimination diet that is followed for 30 days. The premise is to exclude foods that cause cravings and inflammation in order for the body to heal. You can consume real, whole, unprocessed foods including moderate portions of meat, seafood and eggs, plenty of vegetables, some fruit and natural fats. The following foods are forbidden on the Whole 30 diet plan: added sugar, alcohol, grains, legumes and dairy. Many of the foods on the "do-not-eat" list actually are considered healthy with no scientific reason to avoid them.
- **A Vegetarian Diet** eliminates meat while a vegan diet is one that avoids all animal foods. Both can include desserts and processed foods. These diets are healthiest when focused on natural, whole foods that are nutrient dense.
- **Intermittent Fasting** offers a break from calorie counting and food elimination. A variety of intermittent fasting programs exist, including those in which you consume calorie-producing foods and beverages for just four to six hours each day, and others that include two days of low-calorie consumption, alternating with five days of "normal eating." While eliminating calorie counting can be a benefit of intermittent fasting, it still is important to maintain an overall healthy, balanced-eating plan when not fasting.

Each of the above eating plans has its pros and cons. It's important to consume a diet that you find enjoyable and satisfying as well as nutrient dense. Eating the right amount of food and getting proper nutrients ideally will enable you to feel energized and healthy throughout your day. Before making any significant, long-term changes to your diet, it's always best to consult your doctor or a registered dietitian.

# Using Meal Prep to Maintain a Healthy Diet

Our busy lifestyles beg for simplicity. Learning to prep meals in advance might help. By taking an afternoon on the weekend to plan and prepare meals for the week, you've just made one aspect of your week easier.



Below are different ways to help prep meals for the week:

- **Full make-ahead meals** – cook an entire meal and store it in the fridge or freezer.
- **Batch cooking or freezing** – make multiple meals, then portion and store them. This approach is useful for recipes you easily can cook in large amounts, such as soup, rice or sweet potatoes.
- **Meals for one** – prepare food and portion it in single-serving containers.
- **Ingredient prep** – for those who like to cook and serve food all at once, just prep parts of recipes. Chop veggies, mix spices or marinade meat in advance to save time when you are ready to cook. If you are grilling, grill extra chicken for salads or to go with veggies for lunch.

**Why meal prep?** Learning to meal prep not only will save time in the long run, but also will save money and reduce waste. An added bonus is that this method gives you total control of what goes in your food, which is perfect for anyone who wants to avoid processed foods and stay on track with their health goals.

Some people find it easier to take a whole afternoon and prep meals for the entire week. Others do not like the idea of eating food that has been sitting in the refrigerator for three days, so they might prep a few days rather than a week at a time. Do what works best for your palate and your schedule.

**Tips for successful meal prepping:**

- **Keep it simple.** Start with recipes that are easy to cook and store. Use frozen fruits and vegetables so they stay fresh before use. Try hard-boiled eggs for easy go-to snacks.
- **Prep balanced meals.** Plan meals that will keep you satisfied. Make sure to include foods from multiple groups so you are satisfied after eating.
- **Cook recipes you'll actually eat.** Meal prep will not be of value if you do not enjoy the food you've prepared in advance.
- **Make enough food.** Keep in mind your schedule, whether you'll have sit at your desk most days or be on-the-go from meeting to meeting. Prep meals accordingly (grab-n-go cheese sticks and fruit or soup and a salad) and plan for main meals like lunch as well as snacks.

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## Five Tips for Mindful Eating

Learning to eat mindfully is a skill you can develop. To begin, start with one meal per day and try these five tips:

1. **Listen to your body.** Notice if you want to eat because you are hungry or because of non-hunger cues, such as boredom or stress.
2. **Rate your hunger.** Use a scale such as 0=starving; 5=neutral; 10=overstuffed to rate your hunger before you eat to help determine when you truly are hungry.
3. **Cut the distractions.** Turn the TV off, put the phone down and turn your attention to your meal.
4. **Plan to eat more slowly and allow plenty of time.** Feelings of fullness come from a variety of signals your body sends to your brain after you begin eating, which can take up to 20 minutes. Allow enough time to sit down and eat mindfully so you can recognize when you are satisfied.
5. **Make eating an experience.** Use all of your senses and observe the smells, colors, texture and flavor of what you are consuming.

