

# Top 10

## HEALTHY DIETS

Writer Nicole Webb

Lose unwanted kilos, get fit and stay healthy! For many of us, it's the Holy Grail and we make it our lifelong mission. With a myriad of fad diets on the market, it's often hard to weed out the good from the bad. In 2015, it's all about making healthy choices and recognising that when it comes to following an eating plan, there's no one size fits all. Here are the top 10 healthy eating programmes that have been given the tick of approval from experts across the globe.

### 1

#### Ornish

This is all about making you feel better, live longer and lose weight! Developed by Professor of Medicine at the University of California, Dean Ornish – the plan lays out your nutrition, exercise, stress management and emotional support options. Food is categorised into five groups from least to most healthy.

It's about working out which groups you tend to fill your shopping cart up with. Bring in aerobic activities, yoga and meditation and this programme should help with reversing heart disease, lowering cholesterol and preventing Type 2 diabetes; not to mention preventing and treating prostate and breast cancers. There are plenty of recipes to keep you going, and eating out isn't too difficult with the odd glass of alcohol permitted. The US News Panel labelled it "safe and tremendously heart healthy".



CALCASIAN WOMAN PRACTICING YOGA AT SEASHORE/THINKSTOCK. WATER/THINKSTOCK. RAW BEEF STEAK ON WOOD BOARD/THINKSTOCK

### 2

#### Biggest Loser

Just because you're not a contestant on the show doesn't mean you can't win your own weight-loss battle at home (without the pressure of the cameras following your every move)! First, you need to choose the Biggest Loser book you'll follow, which are all based on the same principles and filled with success stories to boost your motivation.

This is not a deprivation diet! You'll eat three meals a day and two snacks with each dish containing a balance of 45 per cent carbs, 30 per cent protein and 25 per cent healthy fats. The diet also recommends drinking six to eight glasses of water a day and cutting down on caffeine. Coupled with regular exercise, the US News and World Health report rated this as a very effective way to keep weight off in the short term and a plan that works moderately well over the long term. It's also been hailed for its role in managing or preventing diabetes.



### 3

#### DASH

It was a race to the finish line, but a last minute 'dash' saw 2015's winner retain her crown for the fourth year running!

DASH stands for 'Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension' and has again been ranked the top overall diet for all ages by a prestigious panel of health experts for US News and World. Initially developed to lower blood pressure without medication, this healthy food plan encourages a wide variety of whole foods, making it flexible and adaptable to your tastes and lifestyle. With DASH, nothing is off the menu, from low-fat dairy foods to fruit and vegetables, whole grains and lean meat. It also focuses on reducing salt intake and increasing good cholesterol while lowering bad cholesterol.

Experts say the common sense and balanced nature of this diet make it a winner for your waistline and your health! Labelled 'a diet for all diseases', it's hard to argue with that!



4

**Flexitarian**

There is a claim that 'Flexitarians' weigh 15 per cent less than their carnivorous mates and have a lower rate of heart disease, diabetes and cancer and live three and a half years longer.

The diet is a marriage of vegetarian and flexibility. It's not about eliminating meat completely, just most of the time.

A Flexitarian adds new 'meats' to their diet like tofu, beans, lentils, peas, nuts and seeds.

It's what they call a '3:4:5' regime, which sees breakfast choices at around 300 calories, lunch at 400 and dinner at 500.

This plant-heavy eating plan has three different levels – beginner, advanced and expert. It will help keep cholesterol in check and heart disease at bay and is very easy to follow (and even better, you can still have a juicy burger every now and then).



5

**Southbeach Diet**

This low GI diet was originally developed for heart patients in the US. With no calorie counting or limit on portions, it's a three meal a day, snacks in between eating plan, with exercise. There are three phases, and after the first one, the dietary restrictions (which ban bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and fruit) ease up. Experts say it's good for delivering short-term weight loss, but keeping it off might prove more difficult. That said, some experts recommend sticking to the 'maintenance' phase of the diet, which encourages more carbohydrates and allows you to make good food choices. If you fall off the wagon, it teaches you how to get back on track.



6

**Mediterranean**

Not just a diet, it's a lifestyle. The 'Mediterranean' eating plan is all about good food, keeping active and socialising with friends, mixed with the odd glass of wine, or two. The theory is, people living in those countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea like Greece, Spain and Italy generally live longer and suffer less disease.

Naturally, this diet is largely inspired by foods eaten in those countries such as fresh fish, fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains. It typically allows for more calories from fat (as long as you choose healthy unsaturated and monounsaturated fats like olive oil). When combined with exercise, the health benefits appear to be second to none.

Not only can you lose weight, control your blood pressure and blood sugar, it protects against chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease and Parkinson's among a host of others. It's a sensible eating plan that's approved by scientists and health experts the world over.



MACROBIOTIC FOOD/THINKSTOCK; GRILLED MEAT/THINKSTOCK; WOMAN HAVING GLASS OF WINE/THINKSTOCK; CLOSE UP OF YOUNG WOMAN EATING SALAD AT HOME/THINKSTOCK

7

**Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes**

Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) is the eating programme that is recommended to lower cholesterol. Created by America's National Institute of Health's National Cholesterol Education Program, it's all about cutting back the fat, namely saturated fat like fatty meat, whole-milk dairy and fried foods. Guidelines stipulate that no more than seven per cent of your day's total calories should come from saturated fat and just 35 per cent from other fats. It claims to lower your bad cholesterol by eight to 10 per cent in just six weeks.

With TLC you are encouraged to get educated about what's on the labels. Straightforward and easy to follow, it's healthy for the heart and while it's not designed for weight loss, it helps maintain a healthy body weight. It's been described as a 'safe' diet but one that requires self-motivation.



9

*New Atkins*

The original Atkins diet has been around for decades – the popular low-carb eating plan credited by people from all walks of life, including celebrities, with turning your body into a fat burning machine! The new Atkins, devised by a trio of US doctors, is similar but allows a wider variety of foods to make it more nutritionally balanced. (Don't worry, eggs are still a staple breakfast!)

The first two weeks will see you on a protein-rich diet, no restrictions on fat and a carb allowance of just 20 grams. It's designed to help you lose as much as 15 pounds in two weeks – and hailed as the key to kick starting your fat-burning metabolism! The next three phases see more carbs introduced.

With a diet of red meat, butter, cream and cheese advocated, experts are concerned it may increase your risk of heart disease; but the idea is once you find your own personal carb limit, you can control weight fluctuations. Advocates say it will burn off your body's fat stores, regulate your blood sugar and help you achieve optimal health, without leaving you feeling hungry or deprived.



8

*Mayo Clinic Diet*

The Mayo Clinic Diet is a lifestyle programme that has earned a spot as one of the healthiest weight loss programmes on the scene.

Using a pyramid as a guide to smart-eating choices, the pyramid base focuses on generous amounts of healthy foods that contain a small number of calories in a large volume of food, particularly fruits and vegetables. Healthy choices in moderate amounts make up the rest of the pyramid.

The Mayo Clinic Diet can be tailored to your own individual needs, teaching you how to estimate portion sizes and plan meals. It doesn't focus on counting calories or eliminating certain foods.

There are two phases, the first to jumpstart weight loss is called 'Lose It' and looks at 15 key habits, ones to ditch and ones to adopt. After two weeks, the 'Live It' phase, which is a lifelong approach to diet and health, kicks in. The theory: You recalibrate your eating habits, breaking bad ones and replacing them with good ones.



10

*Dukan*

This French low carb, high-protein diet has four phases. The first 'Attack' is based on a list of 72 low fat, protein-rich foods for around five days. Unlike the Atkins diet, it bans vegetables and restricts fat. The next three phases: Cruise, Consolidation and Permanent Stabilisation see the introduction of some fruit, veg and carbs and eventually all foods. You can lose weight relatively quickly but there are strict guidelines to follow.

There's an abundance of recipes but alcohol is banned in the early phases. Oat bran is at the heart of this diet and consumed daily as is walking 20 to 30 minutes a day, depending on your phase. Dukan's claim is to help you "stabilise your true weight for life".