

# SHAPE



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## Paleo Diet: Can It Really Help You Lose Weight?

by Yuen Yi Ying

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A dietitian weighs in on whether the paleo diet really helps you drop the kilos.

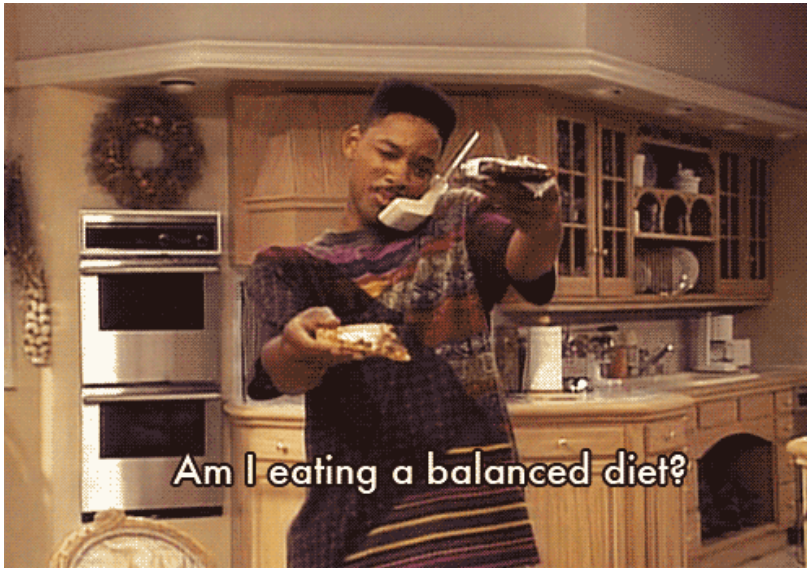
Humans have come a long way since our caveman days, and our diets have evolved significantly too, but enthusiasts of the popular paleo diet claim that eating like cavepeople — that is, eating only foods that can be hunted or gathered such as fish and grass-fed meats, supplemented with vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts — can help you lose weight and body fat, reduce inflammation, as well as improve your

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list, as are ingredients introduced by farming and industrialisation, this means the diet has some surprising exclusions such as legumes, dairy and grains.

(Also read: [5 Super Simple Eating Habits That Will Boost Your Metabolism & Burn Fat](#))



## The Pros

On the upside, the diet seems to simplify the way you eat, and we would all do well to ingest more fibre and nutrients provided by fruits, veggies and nuts. Grass-fed meats, wild game and fish also provide many essential nutrients without dubious antibiotics and hormones.

According to Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants, "the paleo diet can help people lose weight" because it "eliminates highly processed foods which are high in calories and advocates lower calorie foods that are fresh and minimally processed". "You lose weight because your overall calorie intake will be much lower than your usual diet," she explains. Reaffirming her point, one small US study found that participants who switched to a paleo diet for eight weeks managed to cut out about 44 per cent less carbs and consumed about 22 per cent less calories.

(Also read: [These Healthy Gourmet Snacks & Desserts Won't Ruin Your Diet](#))

## The Cons

Unfortunately, when it comes to keeping off the kilos on the Paleo diet, Jaclyn says she wouldn't recommend the diet as a sound diet to lose weight, adding that any weight loss would also be "difficult to maintain".

One of her main concerns is that the paleo diet "restricts highly nutritious foods" such as dairy and grains that contain "many essential nutrients". She tells us that "to lose weight, you do need to eat carbs. If you do not, it can result in starvation mode where your metabolism is lowered your body will compensate by breaking down muscle stores."

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According to Jaclyn, a huge craving for carbs also causes paleo dieters to binge on carb-heavy unhealthy foods such as chips, potato, burgers and bread once they are done with the diet. "It is clearly not a sound diet and not recommended for sustainable weight loss," she warns. Jaclyn also points out that "Paleo dieters tend to be very physically active, exercising at least five times a week burning all those extra kilos. It is a combination of diet and exercise that results in the weight loss and not just the paleo diet alone."



## Should you do it?

Jaclyn highlights that the paleo diet may pose problems for people with various medical conditions. Unless they are going with vegan or vegetarian protein sources, potential dieters with high cholesterol would be at heightened risk from excessive meat consumption, which ups levels of saturated fat and therefore affects their cardiovascular health. The high levels of saturated fat would also block insulin receptors for diabetics.

Additionally, those with hypertension would miss out of the blood pressure-lowering effects of grains. Suffer from osteoporosis? The low calcium levels of the paleo diet will do no wonders. And for those with digestive problems, the diet can also be low in fibre if not carefully considered.

There are other health implications of the paleo diet. While carnivores may delight in this diet's go-ahead to indulge in their favourite meats, be warned that excessive protein consumption — the recommended daily intake for women is 58g, about the amount in a 250g piece of grassfed lean steak or 280g of chicken — especially in middle age, has been linked to higher rates of cancer, according to a study by the University of Southern California in the US.

Still keen on giving the diet a go? Consult a doctor or dietitian who can assess your digestive issues, metabolic condition and overall health before giving their recommendation.

(Also read: [10 Biggest Weight Loss Mistakes Women Make](#))

PALEO DIET

WEIGHT LOSS

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