



DIE, DIE MUST-TRY DIETS?

There are different types of diets that help you achieve your weight-loss goal while some are costly and potentially dangerous. Be sensible, not desperate when adopting a nutrition plan. Carbohydrate is the primary fuel for runners and any diet that restricts it is not ideal.

Text: Jaclyn Reuters

Dieting is common. Everyone has been on a diet at some point in their life. It's either a self-devised diet or a popular diet that movie stars are following. Runners tend to carry extra weight when it is off-peak season, then the need to speed up weight loss when they are preparing for the next race. Hence, the search for a quick weight-loss diet. Admittedly, you will always lose weight on any fad diet. This is because

all of the diets, no matter how uniquely and interestingly designed, promote calorie deficit. Why people follow them is because of the novelty of it; once the novelty wears out, the weight loss stops.

Just remember that a sound diet encourages consumption from all the major food groups, it does not discriminate nutrients (carbs, protein and fat) and is practical to follow for the long term. Carbohydrates are always made the

victim of weight gain and this is a problem for runners who need to perform during training and race day. Be sensible, not desperate when you want to lose weight. You will make better decisions. Carbohydrate is the primary fuel for runners and any diet that restricts it is not ideal.

The following are some of the most popular diets. Choose the one that fits your lifestyle and eating habits. It is also important to check with your doctor to ensure it's safe for you.

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ATKINS DIET

This diet promotes carbohydrate restriction in the belief that carbohydrate is the primary cause of weight gain. It allows protein and fats to be the highlights of this diet. There are four phases to this diet.

In the first phase, you have to restrict your carbohydrate to no more than 20g net carbohydrate weight. They have a special calculation for carbohydrate content which you need to adhere to. You are allowed to eat seafood, meat, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds, oils, fats and fatty foods in unrestricted amounts, as long as it does not contain any carbohydrate. The amounts are not clearly stated but you are given a sample meal plan as a guide. It usually states bacon and eggs for breakfast, chicken for lunch, nuts for a snack and beef steak with a creamy sauce for dinner.

There are only certain vegetables that you can have at this stage for fear of increasing your carbohydrate intake. The ones allowed are broccoli, lettuce, asparagus, celery and cucumber; you still need to calculate the carbohydrate value. Needless to say, any obvious carbohydrate food like bread, rice, noodles, pasta, potato, bread and bananas are forbidden at this stage. The first phase lasts for two weeks.

In the second phase, you are allowed to add back some carbohydrate back into the diet. However, you can only get the carbs from berries and certain fruits. You still continue to eat as much protein foods as you did in the first phase. The length of time varies between individuals. You will stay at this phase until you are 5kg away from your goal weight.

In the third phase, you can expand your variety of foods to include wholegrains, fruits, starchy vegetables like potato and pumpkin. But it is only at 10g carbohydrate increments per week and you must stop if your weight increases. You are still eating the usual protein foods, fats and oils in unlimited amounts. This phase lasts for a month.

In the fourth and final phase, you will pretty much continue the third-phase eating practices but you are supposed to have gotten used to this way of eating making adherence easy. This is the maintenance phase that is supposed to last you a lifetime.

Pros Of The Atkins Diet:

- It educates its followers on what foods contain carbohydrate.
- It is structured. Dieters embrace structure as they feel a sense of accomplishment when they have followed the diet to a tee.

Cons Of The Atkins Diet:

- The core belief of the diet is wrong. It is not carbohydrate that causes weight gain; it is in fact the total amount of calories ingested versus calories expended.
- Your bad cholesterol levels increase from the high intake of saturated fat and cholesterol. Typical foods that are eaten

are bacon, cheese, butter, chicken skin, beef fat and lots of seafood.

- Your heart disease and cardiovascular risks are elevated because of the increased bad cholesterol level.
- This diet is highly restrictive on carbohydrate which is inappropriate for athletes or anyone performing a high level of physical activity.
- You can suffer from constipation due to the low amount of fibre ingested. A high meat intake is typically related to problems with bowel movements.
- A high-protein diet will overload your kidneys and you risk having kidney stones.

- It involves too much calculation of the net carbohydrate value which does not make sense.
- It is unsustainable for the long run because your brain needs carbohydrate to function. You will experience dizziness and fatigue especially in the first phase of the diet.
- You are at risk of keto-acidosis coma because your fats will break down in an unnatural manner that will cause ketone bodies to accumulate in your bloodstream.
- Although you will see results in the short term, but in the long run there are many reported cases whereby the weight lost will be piled back on with more kilos.



PALEO DIET

The Paleolithic (Paleo, as what it is commonly known as) diet is one that encourages the consumption of game meats that are grass-fed, chicken, fish from the wild as opposed to being farmed, shellfish, vegetables, fruit, fungi, root vegetables and nuts. Other names associated with this diet are called the 'Stone Age Diet', 'Raw Foods Diet' or the 'Caveman Diet'. The belief is that a diet high in lean protein, high in fibre, low in sugar and salt will cut the risks of heart disease, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

The Paleo diet omits dairy, legumes, grains, refined sugar, processed foods, salt, refined oils, alcohol and any foods that contain preservatives. The basis of this diet is one that mimics what our ancestors probably ate 10,000 years ago through hunting and gathering. Since no refined sugar is allowed in the diet, you satisfy your sweet craving with raw honey and coconut palm sugar. The beverages allowed are water, coconut water and tea.

There Are Varying Versions Of This Diet:

- ▶ One is allowed to eat starchy vegetables such as potatoes and sweet potatoes
- ▶ Omit light-shade vegetables like tomatoes and eggplant
- ▶ Fish oil supplements are encouraged
- ▶ Allowed to have olive and flaxseed oil
- ▶ Allowed to have the occasional coffee or diet beverage
- ▶ Recommended to do this diet 80% of the time e.g. 2 weeks at a time

Pros Of The Paleo Diet

- ▶ High intake of micronutrients which is good for overall health; vitamins A and C, B group vitamins, zinc, selenium, potassium, magnesium and iron

- ▶ High intake of insoluble fibre which is good for intestinal health
- ▶ Low refined sugar intake reducing risk of certain cancers and indirectly related to cardiovascular disease

Cons Of The Paleo Diet

- ▶ Highly restrictive which makes adherence in the long term very difficult
- ▶ Low-carbohydrate intake which will make you tire easily
- ▶ Low in soluble fibre due to omission of beans, legumes and grains which is required for reducing cholesterol levels
- ▶ Despite the high insoluble fibre content, you can still suffer from constipation because of the lack of grains, bread, potato and pasta that gives bulk to your faecal matter.

- ▶ Risk of osteoporosis due to the lack of calcium intake
- ▶ Your body needs salt/sodium for muscle contractions in your heart, arms and legs. A very low sodium intake and extremely high potassium intake can be potentially life threatening.
- ▶ Sticking to the diet will inflate your supermarket bill significantly. You will end up buying organic foods which are known for its high costs.
- ▶ There are four food groups in a balanced diet: rice and alternatives, meat and alternatives, fruit and vegetables. This diet omits an entire food group, rice and alternatives making it nutritionally inadequate.

Point To Note: You would have to take a calcium supplement if you embark on this diet.



COHEN DIET

The Cohen diet is based on the results of your hormone levels determined by blood tests. A personalised nutrition plan is then created to 'normalise' the relevant hormones. The diet is specifically targeted for weight loss thereby reducing obesity, managing Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The hormones in question are serotonin, insulin and human growth hormone. They were selected amongst the huge array of hormones because of their supposed link with being overweight.

There are reasons why the three hormones were selected: Serotonin is thought to be linked to food cravings; the higher the serotonin level, the stronger your food cravings for carbohydrate-rich food. Insulin is resistant in overweight individuals and is linked to high blood sugar levels; the more carbohydrates you eat the higher the level.

Human growth hormone is thought to maintain muscle whilst breaking down fat.

The nutrition plan is designed to be followed for 12 weeks promising rapid weight loss. It does not omit any food groups but is focused more on protein foods. The carbohydrate content of the diet is low because it is believed that carbs are the culprit for health issues. The number of calories per day ranges from 600 to 1600kcal. The exact quantities of the food you are to eat are provided and you have to be very precise, down to the last gram. The cooking style is also provided but most foods are eaten plain, raw or require no cooking. Types of foods in the plan would be eggs, yoghurt, fish, turkey, lettuce, broccoli and wild rice. You can eat up to eight times a day to prevent drastic blood sugar swings.

Pros Of The Cohen Diet:

- It can be nutritionally adequate because it allows you to eat from all the major food groups.
- It is structured and clear.
- The foods in the diet are nutrient dense and highly nutritious.

Cons Of The Cohen Diet:

- It can be tedious to go through the blood works, sending it to the lab and

Cohen Diet Centre for analysis and then receiving the plan.

- No proven studies that the three hormones selected will solve your weight problems.
- There's difficulty when eating out as you would need to weigh out your food and the cooking method must be as stated in the diet.
- Eating 600kcal a day is very low; you will feel tired and lethargic.

- It is hard to adhere to a very strict diet where timing is crucial if you need to work and carry out your daily chores and activities let alone run.
- After the 12th week, there is no guidance on how to cope with daily food situations. The tendency to indulge in the foods you have not had for 12 weeks is high and weight gain is common once the 12 weeks is up.



THE FOOLPROOF DIET

To lose weight, you need to do only two things: exercise and eat right. Easier said than done but do-able. Running is an excellent form of exercise and it burns those calories well. Now comes the problem, eating right. Everyone has their own thinking about nutrition; however, putting it into practice becomes a blur. Follow the Dos and Don'ts below and you will be on your way to healthy weight loss that boosts your running performance.

Dos

- Do eat carbs. Go for wholegrain versions such as wholemeal bread and brown rice where possible. White rice and noodles do have a place in a weight-loss diet.
- Do eat at least three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Do include a protein food at each meal. This can be milk, eggs, chicken or beef etc.
- Do eat a variety of vegetables; the vitamins and minerals found in them contribute to muscle contractions and recovery.
- Do drink water and the occasional sports drink.
- Do include a nutritious snack such as half a cheese sandwich, yoghurt, low-fat smoothie if your run is more than 6 hours after your previous meal.
- Do control your portion sizes.
- Do make your foods tasty; that will encourage long time adherence. Sauces and gravies are fine, just control the amount.

Don't's

- Don't eliminate carbohydrate foods such as bread, pasta, potato, rice and noodles.
- Don't go fat-free; you cannot eat boiled chicken breast for too long.
- Don't drink protein shakes.
- Don't drink fruit juices; it is better to eat the whole fruit.
- Don't think that after a 10km run, you can treat yourself to a sumptuous meal.
- Don't reward yourself with a big meal at the end of the week. You can undo all your efforts you put in for the entire week.
- Don't overeat fruits and vegetables to fill up your stomach. You will get hungry soon after, leaving you on a hunt for food again.
- Don't snack unnecessarily; you can gain weight by snacking on healthy foods, especially nuts. 

QUICK FACTS

- You will need to run for 8km/hour for an hour to burn off the calories found in a chocolate lava cake.
- Most dieters regain their lost weight within six months after they stopped a diet, plus more.
- Runners who try high-protein diets tire easily and feel more thirsty than usual after a run.
- The type of carbohydrate found in rice is more useful to runners than the type of carbohydrate found in a piece of fruit.