

A Practical Guide to Today's Most Popular Diets

This month we're breaking down the most common eating plans people are following right now. Not to promote one over another, but to understand what each one actually is, where it works well, where it can fall short in a well-rounded diet, and how to fill the nutritional gaps.

KETO

What it is:

- Very low carbohydrate
- Higher fat
- Moderate protein
- Shifts the body from burning sugar to burning fat for fuel



Where it works well:

- Supports blood sugar and insulin regulation
- Reduces cravings and appetite
- Helps with fat loss
- Reduces energy crashes
- Supports metabolic health (blood sugar use, fat storage, energy use)
- Often lowers inflammation when processed carbs and sugars are removed
- May reduce gut irritation for some people by removing refined foods

Where it falls short:

- Fiber intake can be low
- Electrolytes can drop without intentional replacement
- LDL cholesterol may rise in some people
- Can become overly reliant on saturated fats
- Food variety may become limited
- Some people under-eat vegetables
- Can be difficult for some people to maintain long term

How to fill the gaps

- Prioritize leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables

- Add sodium, potassium, and magnesium through food or electrolytes
- Include low-carb berries for antioxidants

Best for:

Best for those looking to improve blood sugar control, manage diabetes or insulin resistance, lower triglycerides, support fat loss and appetite control, reduce inflammation from refined carbohydrates, support some aspects of hormone balance related to insulin, and for more sedentary or desk-based lifestyles. May also support some neurological conditions.

Recipe idea

Keto Garlic butter salmon with Roasted broccoli (See the end for full recipe)

MEDITERRANEAN

What it is:

- Whole foods focused
- Fish, olive oil, vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts
- Moderate grains and dairy

**Where it works well:**

- Strong research for heart health
- Supports blood pressure and metabolic health
- High in whole foods, fiber, and healthy fats
- Encourages food variety
- Sustainable long term

Where it falls short:

- Protein intake may be low if meat and fish are minimal
- Grain-heavy patterns may affect blood sugar for some people
- Easy to overeat calorie-dense foods like oils and nuts
- Health benefits depend heavily on food quality and food choices

How to fill the gaps:

- Add fish, eggs, or meat regularly

- Choose whole grains over refined
- Pair carbs with protein and fat

Best for:

Best for those looking to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, support heart and brain health, improve sleep, balance hormones, fuel endurance athletes and general athletic activity, maintain or build muscle, support bone health, reduce inflammation, and follow a sustainable long-term eating pattern.

Recipe idea:

Mediterranean chicken bowl with Roasted sweet potatoes (See the end for full recipe)

PALEO

What it is:

- Meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds
- No grains
- No dairy
- No processed foods



Where it works well:

- Removes most processed foods
- Supports stable blood sugar
- High nutrient density
- May reduce inflammatory triggers by removing refined grains, industrial seed oils, and ultra-processed foods

Where it falls short:

- Calcium intake can be low without dairy
- Some people under-eat carbohydrates
- Can feel restrictive socially
- Can become expensive

How to fill the gaps:

- Leafy greens, canned fish with bones, almonds for calcium
- Root vegetables and fruit for carbs
- Include variety to avoid burnout

Best for:

Best for those wanting to reduce processed foods, stabilize blood sugar, reduce inflammation from processed and refined foods, support fat loss, maintain general fitness, support hormone balance through whole-food intake, or who feel better avoiding grains or dairy.

Recipe idea

Paleo Herb garlic chicken with roasted root vegetables (See the end for full recipe)

VEGETARIAN

What it is:

- No meat or fish
- Includes eggs, dairy, grains, legumes, vegetables, fruit

Where it works well:

- Increases intake of whole plant foods
- Higher fiber intake
- Rich in plant nutrients
- May improve cholesterol markers when whole-food based

**Where it falls short:**

- Protein intake can be inconsistent and requires intentional planning
- Iron, B12, and zinc can be low long term
- Meals can become grain-heavy
- Blood sugar swings possible for some
- Digestive issues for some with legumes and higher fiber intake

How to fill the gaps:

- Eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese
- Lentils, beans, and tofu paired with fats
- Monitor iron and B12 intake

Best for:

Best for those wanting a plant-forward approach, looking to lower cholesterol when whole-food based, reduce inflammation through whole plant foods, balance hormones when

protein and nutrients are adequate, avoiding meat for personal or cultural reasons, and who include eggs or dairy to support protein needs.

Recipe ideas:

Vegetarian Lentil bowl with roasted vegetables and soft-boiled egg (See the end for full recipe)

VEGAN

What it is:

- Fully plant-based
- No meat, fish, eggs, or dairy
- Vegetables, fruit, grains, legumes, nuts, seeds



Where it works well:

- Emphasizes whole plant foods
- High fiber intake when whole-food based
- Rich in plant nutrients
- Can improve cholesterol markers
- Can improve bowel regularity for some people due to higher fiber intake

Where it falls short:

- B12 deficiency risk
- Protein quality requires intentional planning
- Iron, zinc, iodine, and omega-3 fats may be low
- Can rely heavily on processed foods
- Blood sugar and digestive issues possible for some

How to fill the gaps:

- B12 supplementation or fortified foods
- Combine plant proteins
- Flax, chia, algae for omega-3s
- Sea vegetables or iodized salt

Best for:

Best for those focused on plant-based eating for ethical or environmental reasons, looking to lower cholesterol, increase fiber intake, reduce inflammation when whole-food based,

support endurance athletes with high carbohydrate needs, balance hormones when nutrients are carefully planned, and who are willing to supplement where needed.

Recipe idea:

Vegan chickpea quinoa bowl with roasted carrots and zucchini (See the end for full recipe)

BIG PICTURE TAKEAWAY

No eating plan is perfect on its own.

What actually makes a diet “healthy”:

- Whole foods over processed foods
- Adequate protein
- Healthy fats
- Fiber and plants
- Vitamins and minerals from variety

The best plan is the one that:

- supports energy
- supports individual labs and health markers
- is sustainable
- fits real life

Labels matter less than consistency and nutrient coverage.

That’s where most people succeed or struggle.

Recipes

**Keto garlic butter salmon with roasted broccoli
(serves 4)**

Ingredients

- 4 salmon fillets
- 3 tbsp butter or olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced



- Juice of ½ lemon
- Salt and pepper
- 2 heads broccoli, chopped
- 2 tbsp avocado oil or olive oil
- Salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Place salmon on a lined baking sheet. Melt butter, mix with garlic and lemon, and spoon over salmon. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Toss broccoli with oil and salt. Spread on a separate baking sheet.
4. Roast broccoli for 18 to 20 minutes.
5. Bake salmon for 12 to 15 minutes, until it flakes easily.
6. Serve together.

Mediterranean chicken bowl with roasted sweet potatoes (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 1½ lb chicken breast or thighs
- olive oil
oregano
garlic powder
pepper

- Sweet potatoes
sweet potatoes, cubed
olive oil

- Bowl additions
cucumber, chopped
cherry tomatoes
- ½ cup olives
 - 4 cups greens
 - 2 tbsp olive oil
 - Juice of 1 lemon



- Chicken
- 2 tbsp
 - 1 tsp
 - 1 tsp
 - Salt and
- 2 large
- 2 tbsp
 - Salt
- 1
- 1 cup

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
 2. Toss sweet potatoes with olive oil and salt. Roast 25 to 30 minutes until tender.
 3. Season chicken with olive oil, oregano, garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
 4. Cook chicken in a skillet over medium heat 6 to 8 minutes per side or until done. Slice.
 5. Build bowls with greens, chicken, sweet potatoes, cucumber, tomatoes, and olives.
 6. Drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice.
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Paleo herb garlic chicken with roasted root vegetables (serves 4)

Ingredients

Chicken

- 1½ lb chicken thighs or breasts
- 1/2 tsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- Salt and pepper



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Root vegetables

- 3 cups mixed root vegetables, chopped (carrots, parsnips, sweet potato, turnips)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
 2. Toss root vegetables with olive oil and salt. Spread on a baking sheet.
 3. Mix olive oil, garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, and pepper. Rub over chicken.
 4. Place chicken on a separate baking sheet.
 5. Roast vegetables for 25 to 30 minutes.
 6. Bake chicken 20 to 25 minutes, until cooked through.
 7. Serve together.
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Vegetarian lentil bowl with roasted vegetables and soft-boiled egg (serves 4)

Ingredients

Lentils

1½ cups dry lentils

cups water or broth

Salt

Roasted vegetables

zucchini, chopped

red bell pepper, chopped

red onion, sliced

tbsp olive oil

Salt and pepper

Eggs

- 4 eggs

Dressing

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper

Optional toppings

- Feta cheese
- Fresh parsley

Instructions

1. Cook lentils in water or broth for 20 to 25 minutes until tender. Drain if needed and season lightly with salt.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss vegetables with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast 20 to 25 minutes until tender.
3. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add eggs and cook 6 to 7 minutes. Transfer to cold water, peel, and halve.
4. Whisk olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper for dressing.
5. Build bowls with lentils, roasted vegetables, and egg. Drizzle with dressing and add optional toppings.



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Vegan chickpea quinoa bowl with roasted carrots and zucchini (serves 4)

Ingredients

Quinoa

- 1½ cups dry quinoa
- 3 cups water or broth

Chickpeas

- 2 cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Roasted vegetables

- 3 carrots, sliced
- 2 zucchini, chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Dressing

- 3 tbsp tahini
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2–3 tbsp water to thin
- Pinch of salt

Optional toppings

- Fresh herbs
- Pumpkin seeds



Instructions

1. Cook quinoa in water or broth for about 15 minutes until fluffy.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss carrots and zucchini with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast 20 to 25 minutes.
3. Warm chickpeas in a skillet with olive oil, salt, and pepper for 5 minutes.
4. Whisk tahini, lemon juice, water, and salt to make dressing.

5. Build bowls with quinoa, chickpeas, and roasted vegetables. Drizzle with dressing and add optional toppings.
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Sources

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