



HEALTH

Weight Loss Diet Books

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Quick Facts...

The most effective way to lose weight and to permanently maintain weight loss over time is to moderate calorie and fat intake, follow a healthy balanced diet and stay active.

Weight loss strategies should encourage setting realistic goals and making permanent changes in eating habits.

Approximately 50 percent of Americans are overweight. Carrying too much weight increases the risk of health problems such as hypertension, heart disease, gall bladder disease and diabetes. Losing weight — and keeping it off — can be challenging. Controlling calorie and fat intakes, staying active and changing behavior are keys to weight management.

Calorie Intake

Calorie needs vary from person to person. Age, gender, body size and composition, physical condition, and activity level all play a role in determining how many calories a person needs.

The number of calories required by your body through out the day to do involuntary tasks, such as breathing, producing body heat, keeping your heart beating, and sending messages to and from the brain, is called your basal metabolic rate or BMR. A person's BMR actually represents about 60 percent of the body's daily energy needs. Approximately 30 percent of the body's daily energy needs is used for movement, including a blink of your eye, walking to get the mail, folding laundry as well as jogging around the block. The remaining 10 percent of the body's energy requirement is used to digest food and absorb the nutrients from food.

When it comes to weight management, there is no magic formula. To maintain weight, the number of calories consumed must equal the number of calories the body burns. For people trying to lose weight, the number of calories consumed must be fewer than the number burned each day. The best way to accomplish this is to cut back on calories by decreasing food intake, while increasing physical activity.

If you are trying to cut back on the number of calories you consume, pay attention to portion size. Choosing sensible portions is an important factor in controlling calorie intake and managing your weight. To learn more about what counts as a serving, see Fact Sheet 9.306, *A Guide to Daily Food Choices*.

Fat Intake

Another key component of a healthy eating plan is a moderate fat intake. At 9 calories per gram, fat contains more than twice the calories of protein and carbohydrates (4 calories/gram each). Limiting your fat intake not only reduces fat and calories, but also reduces a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. A healthy goal is 30 percent or less of total calories from fat.

Watching your fat intake doesn't mean you must give up your favorite foods. Choose lean meats and dairy products. Use oils and spreads sparingly. Be aware of hidden fats in foods such as bakery products, crackers, nuts and salad dressings. Learn to modify recipes and use substitutions to lower the fat content.

Keep in mind that a low-fat eating plan is not always low in calories.

When selecting low-fat foods, look at the calorie content as well. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain products and low-fat dairy products tend to be low in fat, refined sugars and calories, yet rich in many vitamins and minerals.

Weight Loss Diet Books

Although many fad diet books promise quick weight loss, many of the diets are usually difficult to continue for a long period and are not nutritious. Despite the fact that people may lose weight initially, often times they easily regain it. At two-year follow-ups, fad diets have a very low success rate.

When selecting a nutrition or diet-related book, don't believe grand claims and testimonials. Look for well-researched books that provide information based on hard science and that fit the criteria outlined under Safe and Effective Weight Loss Plans. The information below provides critiques of numerous popular books and their approaches to weight loss.

Sample Weight Loss Diet Books

Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution

1992 - Robert C. Atkins, M.D. Another book: *Health Revolution*

- **Characteristics:** High protein, high fat, low carbohydrate. Claims diet may help people with food intolerances or allergies, heart disease, diabetes, yeast infections. Megavitamin/mineral supplements daily.
- **Strengths:** Weight loss likely will result because the plan is low calorie. Blood levels of triglycerides may decrease due to limited carbohydrate intake. High fat intake provides satiety for a long period of time.
- **Weaknesses:** Nutritionally unbalanced. Recommends as little as 15 grams carbohydrate a day. No bread, pasta or cereal. Low fruits and vegetables. Ketoacidosis is encouraged.
- **Comments:** Does not teach good eating habits. Can be dangerous. Claims are not nutritionally sound. May initially lose water weight.

The New Cabbage Soup Diet (7-day program)

1997 - Margaret Danbrot.

- **Characteristics:** Eat as much cabbage soup as desired for seven days. Each day during the seven-day program, there are specific foods that must be eaten, such as fruit, vegetables, brown rice and beef.
- **Strengths:** Very few. Allows fruits and vegetables on certain days.
- **Weaknesses:** Diet is too low in complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- **Comments:** Not nutritionally balanced. Does not promote overall good eating habits. Not recommended.

The Carbohydrate Addict's Diet

1991 - Rachel Heller, M.D. and Richard Heller, M.D.

- **Characteristics:** People become addicted to sugar because of its effect on insulin levels. Lose weight by controlling the addiction. Two meals a day consist of high protein foods with very low carbohydrate foods. The third meal is high carbohydrate foods balanced with equally high protein foods.
- **Strengths:** Very few. Does allow selected vegetables.
- **Weaknesses:** Nutritionally unbalanced. Some recipes provided are high in saturated fat. Does not promote an overall healthy eating plan. No structured exercise program is recommended.
- **Comments:** Not based on scientific evidence. Carbohydrates, especially from whole grains, fruits and vegetables, are important components of a healthy eating plan.

Stay Active

People are more successful at losing weight when they alter eating habits and stay active. Physical activity burns calories, raises metabolism, and helps you lose body fat. Staying active also promotes a sense of well-being and has beneficial effects on HDL cholesterol.

Contrary to popular belief, moderate activity does not increase your appetite. Find an activity that you enjoy. If you are very overweight or have other health problems, consult with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Start slowly, then work up to at least 15 minutes a session, three to five times a week.

Breaking the Behavior Chain

Behavior modification techniques can help alter poor eating habits. Begin by recording your eating habits to identify places, emotions or activities that lead to inappropriate eating.

To change those habits, use simple modification techniques. For example, make a rule to not eat when watching television. When you feel stressed, go for a walk or call a friend instead of eating cookies.

Taking personal responsibility for losing weight, believing you can succeed and having support from family and friends also are important factors in losing weight.

Safe and more effective weight loss plans have the following characteristics:

- *Recommend no more than 1 to 2 pounds weight loss per week.*
- *Do not go below 1,200 calories per day.*
- *Refer to the Food Guide Pyramid and Dietary Guidelines. (See Fact Sheets 9.306 and 9.353)*
- *Choose sensible portion sizes.*
- *Encourage exercise.*
- *Include a variety of nutritionally balanced foods from all food groups.*
- *Do not have a list of forbidden foods.*
- *Minimize hunger.*
- *Do not require special foods or vitamin supplements.*
- *Encourage setting realistic weight loss goals and making slow, moderate changes.*
- *Establish lifelong habits.*
- *Fit into your lifestyle.*

Dieting for Dummies

1998 - Jane Kirby, R.D. and The American Dietetic Association

- **Characteristics:** Provides scientifically sound information about many topics related to weight loss. Includes sections about developing a relationship with food, a plan for healthy living, shopping, cooking and dining out.
- **Strengths:** No dietary restrictions or weight loss gimmicks. Promotes eating well-balanced meals and exercising to achieve weight management.
- **Weaknesses:** None.
- **Comments:** Realistic plan for weight control. Advocates reasonable and attainable lifelong healthy eating and exercise habits.

The Divine Diet

2004 - Carole Lewis

- **Characteristics:** Focus is on lifestyle change as a weight loss plan. Success is based on four factors: nutrition balance, exercise balance, emotional balance, and spiritual balance. Sound advice is provided on nutrition and exercise. Advice given on emotional and spiritual balance is based on Christian beliefs.
- **Strengths:** Emphasis is on lifestyle changes and acknowledges the challenge of making a change. Importance is given to good nutrition and physical exercise rather than weight. Good information on calculating body mass index (BMI) and food pyramid, although outdated now. Also, the importance of water, vitamins, minerals, and exercise is discussed. Provides tips on nutrition planning, healthy food choices, portion control, and eating on the run.
- **Weakness:** The two main premises for this “diet” is preparing meals properly and eating moderate amounts. Although portion size was discussed, very little addressed food preparation. Some discussion on salt use but nothing on fat types or use. Book seems to be written to accompany a bible-based program called First Place.
- **Comments:** Good general nutrition information but if you are not interested in Christian spiritual information you will need to skip around a bit. Probably difficult to lose weight with this diet unless accompanied with the “First Place” program.

Eat More, Weigh Less

1993 - Dean Ornish, M.D.

- **Characteristics:** Life Choice vegetarian diet. Low in fat, high in complex carbohydrates and fiber. Believes large changes are easier to make than moderate ones. Includes over 250 appetizing recipes. 10 percent of calories from fat.
- **Strengths:** Heart healthy diet. Does not limit amounts of food (no counting calories). Encourages moderate exercise.
- **Weaknesses:** Advocates giving up all meat, poultry, fish, oils, dairy (except nonfat) and products exceeding 2 grams of fat per serving.
- **Comments:** May be difficult to follow long-term, especially for non-vegetarians.

The G-Index Diet

1993 - Richard N. Podell, M.D.

- **Characteristics:** Classifies foods based on how they affect blood sugar response (glycemic index). Claims eating high G-Index (GI) foods at one meal causes overeating at the next meal. Claims low GI foods lower insulin levels and rev up metabolism so you burn an extra 200 calories.

- **Strengths:** Emphasizes whole grains, low sugar and low fat. Recommends regular exercise.
- **Weaknesses:** Restricts nutrition-rich foods like baked potatoes, pineapple, raisins and carrots.
- **Comments:** Eating a combination of high and low glycemic foods should avoid big blood sugar swings.

Outsmarting the Female Fat Cell

1993 - Debra Waterhouse, M.P.H., R.D.

- **Characteristics:** OFF Plan focuses on exercise, changing eating habits — eat only when hungry, stop dieting, don't overeat, control night snacks, eat small frequent meals, choose low-fat foods (20 percent of calories from fat).
- **Strengths:** Emphasizes slow and permanent body fat loss. Uses behavior modification techniques. No restriction of foods.
- **Weaknesses:** Encourages eating only the first 12 hours of their day. The total number of calories eaten each day (over 24 hours) is what counts not what time of day the calories are eaten.
- **Comments:** Realistic plan for weight control. Allows individual tailoring of plan. Deals with emotional eating.

The Paleo Diet

2002 - Loren Cordain, Ph.D

- **Characteristics:** Suggests that by eating like our ancestors did 2.5 million years ago, risk for developing several chronic diseases decreases and will lead to weight loss at the same time. Basic tenets are to eat unlimited lean meats, fish, seafood, fruits and non-starchy vegetables and avoid cereals, legumes, dairy products and processed foods. Briefly mentions the importance of exercise.
- **Strengths:** Recommends high intake of fruit and vegetables and reduced intake of saturated fat. Suggests eating fewer processed foods.
- **Weaknesses:** Promotes avoidance of cereals, legumes and dairy products, which provide large quantities of many important nutrients, including vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- **Comments:** Not a realistic approach for most people in today's society both from a nutritional and an environmental standpoint.

Protein Power

1996 - Michael Eades, M.D. and Mary Dan Eades, M.D.

- **Characteristics:** Limits intake of carbohydrates to lower insulin levels. Claims insulin causes many health problems, including obesity, heart disease, high cholesterol, hypertension and diabetes. Suggests that by keeping carbohydrate intake low and protein intake high, the body will burn fat faster.
- **Strengths:** Allows more fruits and vegetables than some other high protein diets.
- **Weaknesses:** High in saturated fat. Restricts whole grains and legumes. Low in calcium.
- **Comments:** Not based on scientific evidence. Does not provide a nutritionally sound eating plan.

The Sonoma Diet

2005 - Dr. Connie Guttersen, R.D., Ph.D

- **Characteristics:** This program involves three stages referred to as "waves". Lists of foods allowed for each wave are provided. Different portion size charts are provided based on plates and bowls indicating

how much grain, protein, dairy, fruit and vegetables should be eaten for each wave. The first of three waves focuses on eliminating sugar, switching to whole grains, and reducing fast-absorbing foods. The second wave introduces more variety, allowing some “sweet” items. The third wave focuses on maintenance. Menus and recipes are also included to make meal planning easier.

- **Strengths:** Emphasizes whole grains, low sugar, vegetables. Promotes nutrition dense foods. Emphasizes permanent weight loss through behavior modification; and altering eating behavior of food types and amounts.
- **Weakness:** None.
- **Comments:** Good scientific background of food types. This plan provides healthy weight loss with low calorie but nutrient-dense foods. It also discusses the importance of exercise.

South Beach Diet

2003 - Arthur Agatston, M.D

- **Characteristics:** Based on glycemic index, promotes switching to “good carbs” to control cravings and prevent insulin resistance. Recommends “good fats” to protect the hearth and control hunger pangs.
- **Strengths:** Emphasizes whole grains, legumes, low-fat dairy, vegetables, and heart-healthy fats.
- **Weakness:** Unnecessarily restricts “high glycemic index” foods such as carrots, bananas, pineapple, and other fruits. Justifies low glycemic foods with physiology present in diabetes patients not healthy individuals. Difficult to maintain long term.
- **Comments:** Diet is low in calories, which is most likely responsible for weight loss. Diet plan dichotomizes foods into “good” and “bad”.

Sugar Busters

1998 - Edited by Stewart Leighton. By three physicians and a businessman.

- **Characteristics:** Sugars and foods high in sugar are claimed to be “toxic” and the root of all health problems, including obesity, diabetes and heart disease. These are attributed to insulin that regulates sugar. To “bust” sugar out of the diet, the book recommends avoiding foods with high glycemic index (fruits and vegetables) and compensating with protein (meat) and fat.
- **Strengths:** Research has linked diets high in refined sugars with obesity, dental carries and overall poorer diet quality. Reducing the amount of refined sugars consumed may lower the risk for these health problems
- **Weaknesses:** Promotes foods high in cholesterol, saturated fat. Eliminates many foods that provide essential vitamins and minerals. Recommends not drinking “excessive” fluids (water) with meals. No basis to claim fluids “bypass proper chewing,” “dilute digestive juices.”
- **Comments:** Insulin plays essential role in energy balance. Carbohydrates are important in diet. No scientific evidence for claims made. Claims are false. Not recommended.

The T-Factor Diet

1989 - Martin Katahn.

- **Characteristics:** Initially count daily fat grams. Add fat-free foods to avoid feeling hungry. For faster weight loss, follow Quick Melt program (count calories and fat grams). Recommends physical activity to avoid regaining weight.
- **Strengths:** Focuses on low-fat, high-fiber foods. De-emphasizes calorie counting. No elimination of foods.

- **Weaknesses:** Quick Melt meets RDAs but is low in calories (1,100-1,300/day for women, 1,600-1,800/day for men).
- **Comments:** Lower ranges of recommended fat gram intake are quite low. Lose weight too quickly on Quick Melt.

The Ultimate Weight Solution (Dr. Phil's)

2003 - Phil McGraw, Ph.D.

- **Characteristics:** Emphasizes a psychological approach to weight loss to uncover one's "personal truth: what you think about yourself and your weight." Encourages individuals to replace "toxic messages" with positive thoughts. Other "keys to weight loss freedom" include "no fail environment," "right thinking," "healing feelings," and "circle of support". Indicates that foods that take time to prepare and chew promote weight loss.
- **Strengths:** Addresses emotional eating, encourages physical activity and adoption of positive lifelong eating and activity habits. Recommended foods are generally healthy (low-fat and high fiber).
- **Weaknesses:** Encourages use of "Dr.Phil" dietary supplements, shakes and bars, which are expensive and don't appear to be based on science. Menus, recipes and "how to" suggestions for incorporating foods into daily eating habits are not included. Supplements have been pulled off the market due to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) probe about false claims.
- **Comments:** Includes helpful insight into making personal lifestyle changes. Some recommendations may not be based on solid science. Success stories mostly anecdotal.

The Volumetrics Weight-Control Plan: Feel Full on Fewer Calories.

1989 - Barbara Rolls, Ph.D. and Robert Barnett

- **Characteristics:** Based on "the science of satiety"—what researchers have learned about the food choices that make people feel full. Diet pattern emphasizes low-calorie dense, high-volume foods.
- **Strengths:** Promotes filling up on vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and foods that are nutritionally dense, high fiber, low-fat and low-calorie. The concept of energy density is explained, with tables showing the energy density of various foods. Includes recommendations on physical activity and behavior modification. Includes menu plans, recipes with nutrient values, and tips for modifying favorite recipes.
- **Weakness:**
- **Comments:** Based on studies that show successful, healthy weight loss on low-energy dense foods. Cutting calorie density is the key to weight loss.

The Zone Diet

1995 - Barry Sears, Ph.D.

- **Characteristics:** "Enter the Zone" maintains that carbohydrates are bad because they raise your blood sugar level and cause the release of the hormone insulin — supposed monster hormone. Claims insulin makes it difficult to become thin by turning carbohydrate foods into fat rather than using them for energy.
- **Strengths:** Promotes eating regular meals low in calories. Restricts fat to no more than 30 percent of total calories.
- **Weaknesses:** Promotes diet higher in protein, lower in carbohydrates than recommended. Carbohydrates, not proteins, are the preferred source of energy. If protein is used for energy, nitrogen must be removed. This can overtax the kidneys. Excessive protein intake can

increase the risk for gout. Metabolic pathways supposedly connecting diet, insulin-glucogen and eicosanoids sound impressive but do not exist. Carbohydrates and insulin don't make you fat. Eicosanoids don't cause disease.

- **Comments:** The Zone is based on half-truths, mixed messages and theories, not grounded in peer-reviewed research. There is nothing magical about *The Zone Diet*, it's just a very low-calorie diet.

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