

Weight loss: Choosing a diet that's right for you

Diet type and examples	Flexible?	Nutritionally balanced?	Includes physical activity?	Sustainable over long term?
Balanced (DASH, LEARN, Mayo Clinic, Mediterranean, TLC, Weight Watchers)	Yes. Calories are controlled but no foods are off-limits.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes. Emphasis is on making permanent lifestyle changes.
Fad (cabbage soup, detox, grapefruit, raw food)	No. Emphasizes a single food or combination of foods; all others are limited.	No.	No.	No.
Glycemic index (Sugar Busters)	No. Foods that rapidly increase blood sugar levels, such as white bread and potatoes, are limited.	Deficiencies are possible on very restrictive plans.	Optional.	Possibly. But the diet may be hard to stick to over time.
High protein or low carb (Atkins, Dukan, the Zone)	No. Carbs are limited; fats or proteins, or both, are emphasized.	Deficiencies are possible on very restrictive plans.	Optional.	Possibly. But the diet may be hard to stick to over time.
Low fat (Ornish, Pritikin)	No. Total fat and saturated fat are limited. Because even lean cuts of meat, poultry and fish contain some fat, very low fat diets may ban these foods. Healthy oils, nuts and seeds also may be off-limits.	Yes.	Yes.	Possibly. But the diet may be hard to stick to over time.
Vegetarian	No. Meat is off-limits, and some people also restrict fish and dairy products.	Deficiencies are possible on a vegan diet depending on	Optional.	Yes. But, some people may find it difficult to give up meats.

	There are no specific limits on nonanimal sources of food.	the types of foods chosen.		
Meal replacement (Jenny Craig, HMR, Medifast, Nutrisystem, Slim-Fast)	No. Replacement products take the place of one or two meals a day.	Possibly. Balance is possible if you also make healthy meal choices.	Optional.	Cost of products varies; some may be cost prohibitive.
Very low calorie (Optifast)	No. Calories are severely limited, possibly 200-800 calories a day.	No.	No.	No. Diet is intended only for short-term use with medical supervision.

DASH = Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension; HMR = Health Management Resources; LEARN = Lifestyle, Exercise, Attitudes, Relationships, Nutrition; TLC = Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes.