

Bad Diet or Fad Diet?

Deciphering the Best Way to Eat in 2022

A White Plains Hospital dietitian shares her take on today's popular weight-loss trends.

BY STACEY PFEFFER



IF YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

was to lose weight, you are definitely not alone. But wading through the celebrity and



Elizabeth DeRobertis,
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influencer hype and putting together a diet and action plan that truly works can be tricky. We asked Elizabeth DeRobertis, a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist at White Plains Hospital and

Scarsdale Medical Group, to weigh in (no pun intended) on four popular diets. She shares her helpful tweaks to these diet plans, which turn them into more sustainable lifestyle programs.

"Diet is a four-letter word because it implies that it is temporary and that you'll be deprived. It's important that people understand how to make realistic changes over time," explains DeRobertis.

Check out these modified diet options to find something that will appeal to your taste buds while trimming your waistline.

KETO DIET

Originally developed to prevent seizures in children with epilepsy, the keto diet is high in fat and low in carbohydrates.

PROS: When you reduce your carbohydrate intake, you eat fewer calories, so keto can be effective for weight loss.

CONS: With keto, some people consume too much saturated fat from foods like red meat, butter, and cheese, which raises a person's LDL (low-density lipoprotein). DeRobertis has seen several patients referred by the Hospital's cardiology department with newfound high cholesterol due to keto. "LDL is the lousy cholesterol," she says. "It builds plaque in the arteries and can lead to heart disease."

THE BOTTOM LINE: DeRobertis suggests switching to unsaturated fats (*See story, pg 9*), such as olive oil, avocados, eggs, and lean meats: "These will help promote satiety, so you'll feel fuller longer." They also ensure you have more HDL (high-density lipoprotein), which doctors call the "healthy" cholesterol.

Sample Keto Meal Plan

BREAKFAST: Bacon & eggs

LUNCH: Burger (without bun), cheese, mushrooms, avocado & greens

DINNER: Grilled shrimp & asparagus with lemon butter

SNACK: Cheese cubes



PLANT-BASED DIET

This concept isn't just for vegetarians who adhere to a plant-only diet for religious or ethical reasons. The basic idea is to consume more fruits and vegetables throughout the day, coupled with lean proteins.

PROS: Most fruits and vegetables are low in calories and high in nutrients. Adding in lean proteins, such as fish and turkey, helps achieve a well-balanced diet.

CONS: Beware of plant-based items trying to mimic the taste and texture of meats.



These faux meats offer a long list of processed ingredients and are full of saturated fat, cautions DeRobertis. Opt for a salmon, turkey, or veggie burger instead.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Most people wrongfully worry that they won't consume enough protein, which is about .8 grams per kilogram of body weight for a typical person. DeRobertis recommends being mindful of which protein sources you choose. For example, if you are choosing beans for your protein, pair them with veggies as a side—skip the rice—so you don't end up with double or triple carb sources at the same meal.

Sample Plant-Based Meal Plan

BREAKFAST: Oatmeal with fruit and peanut butter

LUNCH: Chickpea wrap with spinach and avocado

DINNER: Brown rice burrito bowl with beans

SNACK: Veggies and hummus

INTERMITTENT FASTING

There are many different ways to incorporate intermittent fasting. Some people do a 12- or 16-hour fast in a 24-hour period. Others opt for eating only 500 calories twice a week, with a normal schedule the other days. Most research, however focuses on an eight-hour window of eating and 16 hours of fasting on a daily basis.

PROS: DeRobertis conducted a small pilot study during the pandemic and found that her patients who did intermittent fasting and ate during an eight-hour window, delaying breakfast, lost more weight than those who did



not. "If you delay your first meal, your body starts burning fat as fuel, so you may not need as many snacks throughout the day. Overall, you consume fewer calories," she explains.

CONS: People think that intermittent fasting gives you carte blanche to eat whatever you'd like during that eight-hour window. "Not so. Watch those calories," warns DeRobertis.

THE BOTTOM LINE: "If you need to modify this because you have dinner plans or want to eat weekend breakfasts with your family, you can. Delaying breakfast over time is more sustainable than a strict cut-off time for eating," she says.

Intermittent Fasting Suggested Meal Times

8 AM: Coffee/tea/water

12 PM: Lunch

3 PM: Midday snack

7 PM: Dinner

8 PM: Small snack

8 PM+: Water

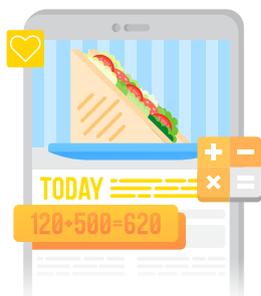
APP-BASED DIETS

There are many free apps such as Lose It or My Fitness Pal, or paid apps like Noom that track your daily food intake.

PROS: These are user-friendly. "Food tracking is very helpful and makes you more conscious of what you are eating," explains DeRobertis.

CONS: Some people get caught up in counting macros (proteins, fats, and carbs), but DeRobertis believes calorie counting is more essential for weight loss.

THE BOTTOM LINE: "People who track their food, whether in a spiral notebook or an app, lose weight," she says. "It helps educate you on how calories add up, and it lets you see what to splurge on. If you are careful 80% of the time, you have 20% flexibility for special occasions."



Introducing the "GPS" Weight-Loss Program at WPH

When in-person diet support groups were prohibited during the pandemic, DeRobertis used her 20-plus years of experience with clients to instead offer a tailored online approach to weight loss. Her program offers lifetime access to 50 bite-size videos on topics such as strategic snacking and alcohol hacks, plus 60 recipes and a seven-day meal plan. Participants receive a digital smart scale from the Hospital, and DeRobertis monitors participants' weight loss via a tracking app. She also created a private Facebook support group for participants, which she moderates daily. "The program helps you to turn on your internal GPS, so you can navigate different situations and get to your goal!" she says. To learn more about the program or to make an appointment, call (914) 723-8100.

GPS Diet Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast: **2 Eggs, any style, or egg bites**

Snack: **String cheese or 1 piece of fruit**

Lunch: **Whole grain bread, thin sliced + turkey + light cheese**

Snack: **100-calorie cup of guacamole + veggies for dipping**

Snack: **100-calorie bag of almonds**

Dinner: **Lean-and-green meal (chicken or fish + veggies) + a "carb swap," such as zucchini noodles or cauliflower rice**

Snack: **Frozen yogurt pop**