The Trend Diets
A Look at today's most popular diets

By Mark Farmer

Strictly speaking, our “diet” is whatever we eat. For some years, however, the term has been synonymous with weight loss. It conjured up images of calorie counting, carbohydrate charts, and fat grams, all topped with a helping of discipline, and maybe a lapse or two on the side. Nutrition or health often were meager portions if they were served at all. The goal was to trim the waistline. But increasingly, creators of weight-loss diets present health concerns, e.g. nutrients and exercise, as integral parts of their programs. Likewise, proponents of health-based diets say that achieving proper weight is a natural result of their regimens.

Finding the right diet may not be easy. A blizzard of dozens, if not hundreds, of diet philosophies are available to the consumer. The principles of some conflict with those of others.

Beginning with this of Today’s Chiropractic, we’re tackling some of the popular trend diets of today. Our guide/summary of eight of the most popular diets (some are actually weight-loss programs and some are food philosophies that mix in a little food ethics) is featured in this article, and we will be following up in every issue this year with an in-depth analysis of each of these diets by a nutritional expert.

What follows are synopses of the eight popular diets, presented as a starting point for diet research. Bear in mind that these are boiled-down versions of the diets. In some cases, the programs span full-length books or more. Careful study, as well as consultation with a health care provider, should precede starting any diet, and keep an eye out for insightful analysis on all these diets in our following issues.

Atkins Diet
First outlined by Dr. Robert Atkins in the early 1970s, the Atkins Diet is probably the best-known of the low-carbohydrate diets. It espouses four “nutritional principles,” weight loss, weight maintenance, health, and disease prevention.

The weight loss and maintenance logic goes like this: The human body normally uses carbohydrates for energy, but will turn to burning its stored fat if the carbohydrate intake is reduced sufficiently. Each person has his or her own level of carbohydrate consumption below which this switch kicks in. Transitioning to the new body state, known as lipolysis/ketosis, is accomplished by means of an “Induction” phase that lasts a minimum of 14 days. During Induction, carbs are significantly restricted. Likewise, for the “Maintenance” segment, a level of carbohydrate intake exists, higher than during Induction, that will hold weight steady once the desired goal is met. Atkins says the hunger and deprivation common to other diets is eliminated with the right balance of fat and carbohydrates.

Beyond weight loss, the author says his diet plan makes use of foods with high nutrient value, which are more likely to promote good health than a low-fat, low-cal diet. The regimen may require vitamin and mineral supplements, and includes exercise as an “essential” component. Atkins claims that by following the program correctly, which both boosts nutrition and reduces the body’s insulin production, “people who are at high risk for or diagnosed with chronic diseases can see improvement in clinical parameters.” (Insulin levels, in addition to impacting hunger and health, affect the burning of fat. Less insulin makes the body use fat instead of carbohydrates for fuel.)

South Beach Diet
Dr. Arthur Agatston, a Florida cardiologist, developed the
South Beach Diet to help his heart patients. The South Beach Diet resembles the Atkins Diet, but has some key differences. Agatston stresses that the plan isn’t low-carb or low-fat, but leads adherents through a three-phase program that shows them how to identify and eat the right carbohydrates and fats.

That said, the two-week first phase is practically carbohydrate-free. Breads, pastas, cakes, and the like are prohibited. The doctor insists that this phase is much less painful than it sounds—except for maybe the first couple of days. He predicts a weight loss of 8 to 13 pounds by the end of two weeks. South Beach echoes Atkins when speaking of a switch that gets flipped during the plan’s initial days—a fat-storing switch that moves to the “off” position.

Phase two begins the re-introduction of carbohydrates in controlled amounts. Desserts are even allowed during this segment. The phase ends when the goal weight is achieved. Average weight loss in phase two is one to two pounds per week.

The final phase, characterized as a lifestyle rather than a diet, allows yet more favorite foods, but again, under some rules. Agatston explains that sticking to the plan should result in improved health and longevity.

**Zone Diet**

The Zone program, developed by Dr. Barry Sears, features four “key elements,” one of which is the Zone Diet itself. The diet is based on the premise that evolution designed the human digestive system to process natural carbohydrates (the kind found in vegetables) and lean protein. Refined foods such as bread and pasta are too dense in carbohydrates, resulting in high insulin levels and subsequent conversion of excess carbohydrates into body fat. Similarly, The Zone Diet says saturated fats are bad, but that monounsaturated fats, like that found in olive oil, are good.

According to the Zone rules, carbohydrates, proteins, and fats should be eaten in a 40-30-30 ratio, respectively, at each meal. They go on to explain a way to determine portion size—The Eyeball Method—that uses the dieter’s hand as a measuring instrument. For example, the Zone web site states, “The size of your hand is relative to the size of your body and, therefore, your protein needs. Your protein portion should be equal to the size and thickness of your palm.” Further, the five fingers of the hand remind the dieter to eat five times per day, three meals and two snacks, and to never let more than five hours pass without eating. The expected weight loss is greatest in the first two weeks and then levels off to about a pound per week.

The second key to the plan emphasizes making monounsaturated fat a staple. Fat is said to slow down the body’s absorption of food and tells the brain to send out a “stop eating” signal. Part three of the program deals with supplementation using omega-3 fish oils, nutrients described as vital to overall health and prevention of disease. The final segment lays out an exercise routine.

**Ornish Diet**

Dr. Dean Ornish disagrees with what some people are eating. He decry’s the low-carb diets as not scientifically based. His weight-loss diet, set forth in the book *Eat More, Weigh Less*, was derived from earlier success at developing diets for his heart patients. His first two diets, one designed to reverse heart disease and the other designed to prevent it, are vegetarian. The overarching goal for these programs is a healthier heart through the reduction of cholesterol in the patient’s blood.

In the forward to *Eat More, Weigh Less*, Ornish walks the reader through how various foods affect the body. He claims that diets based on animal fat can lead to everything from bad breath to impotence to cancer. He draws a sharp distinction between good carbohydrates and bad ones. The bad carbohydrates, such as sugar, can adversely affect the body’s insulin levels and cause weight gain. By the same token, good carbohydrates don’t spike the insulin levels and therefore don’t lead to weight gain, and in fact, reduce it. Moreover, good carbs usually come from vegetables and whole grains that are rich in fiber and valuable nutrients. Fiber slows absorption of these foods, which in turn reduces weight.

The title of the book comes from Ornish’s observation that the plant-based foods he recommends have fewer calories by weight than do meats and simple carbohydrates. It follows that the dieter can eat more while consuming fewer calories and thus keep unwanted pounds off.

Ornish insists this will help people stay on the diet because it’s not based on skimpy portions.

**Weight Watchers**

Weight Watchers, around since the early 1960s, is one of the older and better-known weight-loss diets. Founder Jean Nidetch first gathered friends into her Queens, New York, home to discuss how to lose weight. Today, millions follow the program. Weight Watchers also boasts a celebrity spokesperson, Sarah, Duchess of York, who in 1997 reached her goal weight using the system and has maintained it ever since.

The diet is somewhat different from others now popular in that it doesn’t exclude any type of food. Instead, all foods are assigned a certain number of points. Dieters can eat whatever they want as long as they stay within their daily point allotment, which is determined using the dieter’s current weight. Additionally, 35 “FLEXpoints” are allowed each week to handle “food challenges,” presumably unexpected eating situations and food cravings. The program provides materials to help calculate points used when eating. It also features “activity points” that accrue through exercise. These can be traded for food points or used to quicken weight loss.

Integral to the program, and reminiscent of its origin, are weekly counseling meetings where dieters gather to support one another’s effort. Each local meeting

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dairy consuming diet. Biomechanical subluxations usually occur in a contiguous pattern, with the spinous processes in a similar rotation pattern.

An underlying factor that results in unsuspecting chronic pain is junk food, processed food, donuts, snack food, French fries, and many commercial salad dressings. The reason for this is that trans fat inhibits your body’s ability to make Prostaglandin 1 and 3. The half-life for trans fat is 51 days. That means if you have a donut, fries or a chicken nugget fried with trans fat today, in 102 days, 25 percent of the negative, sabotaging chemical interruptions affect the cellular level are still occurring. Patients who eat this will typically not have an adequate Prostaglandin 3 to give them the pain relief needed to consistently respond positively to spinal correction.

I have found in my practice a prostaglandin-enhancing protocol that works the best. It requires one tablespoon of high quality, organic high-lingan flax oil liquid per 100 pounds of body weight. Patients can also take up to 12 capsules to equal the one tablespoon. I suggest a low-dosage, whole-food B vitamin (between three and six daily), and normally 150 mg per day of B6. I also recommend one salmon capsule per day for 18 days because of the half-life of this fatty acid (vegetable oils, not heated) is 18 days. When you reach day 18 with the salmon oil, the ALA pathway from the vegetables eaten in your diet with the proper constituents (vitamins and minerals) has “kicked in,” making Prostaglandin 3 for pain relief, DHA for ADHD patients and EPA for cardiovascular patients. I do not suggest you recommend salmon oil every day unless you monitor your patients’ prothrombin bleeding time.

I want you to be logical; there are many causes of pain. I have focused on this aspect because people today consume high amounts of food that are processed and synthetic. My clinical based evidence and applied research confirms correcting fat metabolism reduces pain.

About the author: Dr. Robert DeMaria has used this protocol to help his ADHD adult and child patients. He notes that, using this protocol, chronic pain tends to go away quietly; skin tone will improve; hair quality will be enhanced along with other positive responses. DeMaria has been in practice since 1978 and has diplomat status in Chiropractic Orthopedics and a fellowship in Applied Spinal Biomechanical Engineering. He focuses his practice on subluxation correction and whole body wellness. He is an author, lecturer, clinical researcher and director of Drugless Healthcare Solutions. He is the author of Stop ADHD, ADD, ODD, Hyperactivity: A Drugless Family Guide to Optimal Health. More information about his book is featured on page 71. Dr. DeMaria can be contacted via email at druglesscare@aol.com

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has a leader who began as a member and who presides over the meetings and orients new members. At meetings, attendees go through a confidential weigh-in to track progress. Dieters’ weights can be kept secret if desired, and verbal participation at meetings is not required. Fees, which vary among locations, are charged for meetings.

Raw Diet
More accurately called the “Caveman” or Paleo style of diet, this philosophy says that we should eat what our ancestors ate because human evolution hasn’t kept pace with the food source revolution. (Recall that the Zone Diet uses this same logic.) It argues that animal species are slow to adapt to new food sources. Homo sapiens ate raw food for millennia and haven’t evolved to eat cooked vegetables, let alone the cornucopia of processed foods available to modern man. Thus, food in its natural state is best for us. As one writer puts it, “For a typical Westerner at least 70 percent of calories are provided by foods that were practically unavailable during human evolution, namely dairy products, oils, margarine, refined sugar and cereals.”

But, the diet is a bit hard to pin down when it comes to the details of which foods to consume. Proponents appear to follow the diet with a “cafeteria” approach, selecting this or that item as best suits them. For example, some advocates recommend dining on meat, which of course must be cooked. Likewise, raw dieters differ over whether certain dairy products are allowed. Some say the advent of cooking allowed the consumption of certain plants that were previously considered inedible, such as grains and beans; those, too, are to be avoided. Others say grains and beans can be eaten after preparation through sprouting.

Not surprisingly, many modern ailments, as well as rising obesity rates, are blamed on the shift away from the prehistoric diet. Advocates use this as further evidence of the diet’s virtue.

Vegan Diet
As much a lifestyle as a diet, veganism flows from a wish to spare animals any harm. Vegans eschew animal products of any kind, such as leather. They also attempt to determine which foods at first may appear to be vegan, yet harbor an animal product in their processing. Some beers and wines, for instance, are refined with animal products. Vegans reject eating eggs and drinking milk because they claim chickens and cows are harmed by the industries that do the processing. Even honey is often shunned because vegans reason that bees make honey for the good of the hive and not for humans to exploit.

Most of the health claims of veganism derive from the avoidance of meat, with its bad reputation, and with the natural nutrition garnered from a plant-based diet.

Vegetarian Diet
Vegetarianism holds parallels to both veganism and the Caveman diet. Like vegans, vegetarians, as the name suggests, avoid the eating of meat. On the other hand, some persons who for health reasons eat no animals or animal by-products at all, may have no compunction about wearing leather shoes. Similar to the Caveman dieters, some vegetarians blur the line on exactly what constitutes allowable food. Some who call themselves vegetarians will also eat fish, eggs or dairy products on occasion. Chicken can even find its way onto the menu.

Like the vegans, vegetarians say their diet boosts health by cutting the fat common to a diet with a large percentage of red meat. Additionally, they point to the nutrients and fiber in vegetables as beneficial to health.