

20 Foods to Eat on the Keto Diet

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Eating high fat low carb foods is the principal of a Keto diet. Followers of this diet may consume a variety of animal proteins, dairy, vegetables, other plant-based foods, and fats and oils.

The ketogenic diet's increasing popularity is largely due to its potential benefits for weight loss and blood sugar control (1[✓], 2[✓], 3)

Early evidence also suggests that this low carb, high fat diet can help treat certain cancers, Alzheimer's disease, and other health conditions. Still, higher quality research is still needed to determine the long-term safety and effectiveness (1[✓], 4[✓], 5, 6[✓], 7[✓], 8[✓]).

The keto diet typically limits carbs to 20–50 grams per day.

While some people on keto count their total carb intake, others count net carbs. Net carbs refer to total carbs minus fiber. That's because fiber is indigestible, so it can't be broken down and absorbed by your body.


This diet may seem challenging, but it allows people following it to eat many nutritious foods.





Here are 20 healthy foods to eat on the keto diet.


1–3. Animal proteins


Nadine Greeff/Stocksy United


1. Seafood

[Fish](#) and shellfish are very keto-friendly. Salmon and other fish are not only nearly carb-free but also rich in B vitamins, potassium, and selenium ([9](#) ).

However, the carb count in shellfish varies by type. While most crabs contain no carbs, oysters and octopus do. You can eat these foods on the keto diet, but it's important to carefully track your carbs to stay within your range ([10](#) , [11](#) , [12](#) , [13](#) ).



Additionally, [salmon](#), sardines, mackerel, and other fatty fish are very high in omega-3 fats, which have been associated with lower insulin levels and increased insulin sensitivity in people who are overweight or have obesity (14 )


Frequent fish intake is linked to improved brain health and a decreased risk of disease (15 , 16 )


The American Heart Association recommends that adults over 18 years old eat 8–10 ounces of seafood per week (17 )

2. Meat and poultry

Meat and poultry are considered staple foods on the keto diet.


Fresh meat and poultry contain no carbs and are rich in B vitamins and several important minerals. They're also a great source of high quality [protein](#), which may help preserve muscle mass during a very low carb diet (18 , 19 , 20).


One small study in older women found that a diet high in fatty meat led to 8% higher levels of HDL (good) cholesterol than a low fat, high carb diet (21 )


It may be best to choose [grass-fed meat](#), if possible, since it has more omega-3 fats and [conjugated linoleic acid \(CLA\)](#) than meat from grain-fed animals (22 , 23).

3. Eggs

[Eggs](#) are an extremely healthy protein source.

Because each large egg contains less than 1 gram of carbs and about 6 grams of protein, eggs can be ideal for keto (24 )

In addition, eggs have been shown to trigger hormones that cause feelings of fullness (25 )

It's important to eat whole eggs rather than egg whites since egg's nutrients are found in the yolk. This includes the anti-oxidant [lutein](#) and [zeaxanthin](#), which protect eye health (26 )

Although egg yolks are high in cholesterol, they don't appear to increase your risk of heart disease (27👍).

SUMMARY

Most animal proteins — such as eggs, beef, pork, poultry, and seafood — are low in carbs and appropriate for the keto diet.

4–7. Dairy and dairy alternatives

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4. Cheese

There are hundreds of types of [cheese](#), most of which are very low in carbs and high in [fat](#), making them a great fit for the keto diet.

Just 1 ounce (28 grams) of cheddar cheese provides 1 gram of protein, and a good amount of calcium (28👍).

Cheese is high in saturated fat, but it hasn't been shown to increase risk of heart disease. In fact, some studies suggest that it may be protective against this condition (29👍, 30).

Cheese also contains CLA, which has been linked to fat loss and improvements in body composition (31✓).

In addition, eating cheese regularly may help reduce the loss of muscle mass and strength that occurs with aging.

A 12-week study in older adults found that those who ate 7 ounces (210 grams) of ricotta per day experienced less loss of muscle mass and muscle strength than those who didn't eat this amount of cheese (32✓).

Here are some cheeses that are lower in carbs for a keto diet.

Keto cheese list

- blue cheese
- Brie
- Camembert
- cheddar
- chevre
- Colby jack
- cottage cheese
- cream cheese
- feta
- goat cheese
- halloumi
- Havarti
- Limburger
- Manchego
- mascarpone
- mozzarella
- Muenster
- Parmesan
- pepper jack
- provolone
- Romano

- string cheese
- Swiss cheese

5. Plain Greek yogurt and cottage cheese

Plain Greek yogurt and [cottage cheese](#) are nutritious, high protein foods. While they contain some carbs, you can eat them in moderation on keto.

Both [yogurt](#) and cottage cheese have been shown to help decrease appetite and promote feelings of fullness ([33](#), [34](#) ✓).

Either one makes a tasty snack on its own, but you can combine them with chopped nuts, cinnamon, or other spices to make a quick keto treat.

6. Cream and half-and-half

Cream is composed of the fatty portion of fresh milk that's separated out during milk processing. Half-and-half, on the other hand, is made of 50% cream and 50% whole milk.

Both of these dairy products are very low in carbs and high in fat, making them ideal for keto ([35](#) ✓, [36](#) ✓).

Like other fatty dairy products, butter and [cream](#) are rich in CLA, which may promote fat loss ([31](#) ✓).

Despite this, it is best to enjoy cream and half-and-half in moderation.

The American Heart Association 2021 dietary guidance states that people should limit foods high in saturated fat. Replacing animal and dairy fat with plant-based sources of fat or polyunsaturated fats is linked with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke ([37](#) ✓).

Some studies have suggested that high fat dairy products may not be so closely linked to heart disease. Others suggest that a moderate amount of high fat dairy may reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke, but the evidence remains inconclusive ([30](#) ✓, [38](#), [39](#) ✓).

This is an area that continues to be under debate and can be influenced by many factors, such as the level of processing food has gone through ([37](#) ✓, [40](#) ✓).

Cream and half-and-half are popular choices for adding to coffee or using as keto alternatives to small amounts of milk in cooking.

7. Unsweetened plant-based milk

Several varieties of plant-based milk are keto-friendly, including soy, almond, and [coconut milk](#) (41✓, 42✓, 43✓).

You should choose unsweetened versions. Sweetened options have too much sugar to be considered appropriate for keto.

Additionally, you should avoid [oat milk](#), because even unsweetened oat milk is too high in carbs to be keto-friendly (44✓).

SUMMARY

Several types of dairy and dairy alternatives are suitable for keto, including cheese, plain yogurt, cottage cheese, cream, half-and-half, and certain unsweetened plant milks.

8–12. Vegetables

8. Green leafy vegetables

Green leafy veggies are extremely low in carbs, making them excellent for keto. They're also rich sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants (45).

In particular, dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, and collard greens are packed with vitamin K and iron (45).

Greens add bulk to your meals without drastically increasing the carb count. Additionally, herbs such as oregano and rosemary add ample flavor with almost no carbs.


Here are some keto-friendly leafy greens:

- **Salad greens:** lettuce, baby spinach, arugula, [escarole](#), and frisee
- **Cooking greens:** bok choy, [collard greens](#), mustard greens, kale, spinach, Swiss chard, and cabbage
- **Herbs:** thyme, sage, mint, oregano, dill, parsley, cilantro, basil, rosemary, and lemongrass

9. Peppers

Several varieties of peppers exist, all of which are appropriate for the keto diet. While they're technically fruits, they're treated like vegetables in cooking.

Small hot peppers add spice to recipes, and [jalapeños](#) are ideal for making keto-friendly appetizers. You can use larger, mild peppers such as bell peppers and poblanos in numerous dishes, or stuff them to make flavorful low carb main dishes.

Peppers are also a rich source of vitamin C. For instance, one bell pepper provides 107% of the daily value (DV) for vitamin C (46 .

10. Summer squash



Summer squashes, such as yellow squash and zucchini, are versatile and low in carbs.

In fact, zucchini is extremely popular on keto. Using a spiralizer, you can make zucchini noodles, which are an excellent [substitute for pasta or](#)


noodles.

You can grate [zucchini](#) to make a rice alternative or add it to baked goods without affecting the flavor. You can also slice it thinly using a mandoline, then toss it with olive oil, salt, and pepper to enjoy it as a cold salad.

11. High fat veggies

[Avocados](#) and olives, while technically both fruits, are unique among vegetables in that they're fairly high in fat. They also contain fiber and are low in net carbs ([47](#) , [48](#) ).

Oleuropein, the main antioxidant in olives, has anti-inflammatory properties and may protect your cells from damage ([49](#)).

Additionally, one study found that people who ate one avocado per day experienced improvements in heart health risk factors, including lower levels of [LDL \(bad\) cholesterol](#) ([50](#) ).

12. Other nonstarchy vegetables

Several other [nonstarchy vegetables](#) are low in calories and carbs yet full of nutrients and antioxidants.

What's more, low carb veggies make great substitutes for high carb foods.

For instance, you can easily turn low carb cauliflower into [cauliflower rice](#) or mashed cauliflower. Spaghetti squash serves as a natural alternative to spaghetti, and low carb root veggies such as jicama and turnips make great substitutes for roasted potatoes or french fries.

Here are some other examples of keto-friendly vegetables.

Keto vegetable list

- asparagus
- broccoli
- cabbage
- cauliflower
- mushrooms

- cucumber
- green beans
- eggplant
- tomatoes
- spaghetti squash
- jicama
- radishes
- turnips
- Brussels sprouts
- celery
- okra

Veggies to avoid on keto

Keep in mind that not all vegetables are low in carbs. Some should be avoided on keto, including:

- potatoes and sweet potatoes
- onions (in large amounts)
- certain winter squashes, such as acorn squash and butternut squash
- corn
- beets

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SUMMARY

You should eat plenty of nonstarchy vegetables — inc greens, summer squash, peppers, avocados, and olive keto.

13–16. Other plant-based foods

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13. Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds are healthy, high in fat, and low in carbs.

Frequent nut intake is linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, certain cancers, depression, and other chronic diseases ([51](#)✓, [52](#)).

Furthermore, nuts and seeds are high in fiber, which can help you feel full and naturally lower your calorie intake ([53](#)✓).

Although most nuts and **seeds** are low in net carbs, the amount varies widely by type. The lowest in carbs — and therefore the best for keto — are ([54](#)✓, [55](#)✓, [56](#)✓, [57](#)✓, [58](#)✓, [59](#)✓):

- almonds
- macadamia nuts
- pecans
- walnuts
- chia seeds
- flaxseeds

Most [fruits](#) are too high in carbs to eat on the keto diet, but berries are an exception.

[Berries](#), particularly raspberries and strawberries, are low in carbs and high in fiber. While blackberries and blueberries are lower in carbs than some other fruits, they may not fit into strict keto diets ([60](#) ✓, [61](#) ✓, [62](#) ✓, [63](#) ✓).

These tiny fruits are loaded with antioxidants that may reduce inflammation and help protect against disease ([64](#) ✓, [65](#) ✓).

15. Shirataki noodles

[Shirataki noodles](#) are a fantastic addition to the keto diet. They contain less than 1 gram of net carbs and only 15 calories per serving because they're mostly water ([66](#) ✓).

These noodles are made from a viscous fiber called [glucomannan](#), which offers many potential health benefits ([67](#) ✓, [68](#)).

Viscous fiber forms a gel that slows down food's movement through your digestive tract. This can help decrease hunger and blood sugar spikes, which may aid in weight loss and diabetes management ([67](#) ✓, [68](#), [69](#)).

Shirataki noodles come in a variety of shapes, including rice, fettuccine, and linguine. You can swap them for regular noodles in almost all recipes.

16. Dark chocolate and cocoa powder

Dark chocolate and [cocoa](#) are delicious sources of antioxidants.

Dark chocolate contains flavanols, which may reduce your risk of heart disease by lowering blood pressure and keeping your arteries healthy ([70](#) ✓, [71](#) ✓, [72](#)).

Somewhat surprisingly, you can eat chocolate on keto. However, it's important to choose [dark chocolate](#) that contains a minimum of 70% cocoa solids — preferably more — and eat it in moderation.

Other plant foods that are ideal for keto diets include berries, shirataki noodles, nuts, seeds, and dark chocolate.

Fats and oils

Nadine Greeff/Stocksy United

17. Olive oil

[Olive oil](#) provides impressive benefits for your heart.

It's high in oleic acid, a monounsaturated fat that has been found to decrease heart disease risk factors ([73](#) ✓, [74](#) ✓.)

In addition, extra-virgin olive oil is high in polyphenol antioxidants — plant compounds that further protect heart health by decreasing inflammation and improving artery function ([75](#) ✓, [76](#) ✓).

As a pure fat source, olive oil contains no carbs. It's an ideal ingredient for salad dressings and [healthy mayonnaise](#).

Because olive oil isn't as stable at high temperatures as safflower oil, it's best to use olive oil for low heat cooking or add it to dishes after they've been cooked.

Other excellent plant-based oils to try on keto are coconut oil and avocado oil.

18. Butter and ghee

Butter and ghee are good fats to include while on the keto diet. Butter contains only trace amounts of carbs, and ghee is totally carb-free (77✓, 78✓).

Ghee is clarified butter made by heating butter and removing the milk solids that rise to the top. It has a concentrated buttery taste and is commonly used in Indian cooking.

Like other types of full fat dairy, butter and **ghee** don't appear to be as harmful to health as previously thought (30).

SUMMARY

The best fats and oils for keto cooking and baking are olive oil, butter, and ghee. Avocado and coconut oils are good choices as well.

19–20. Beverages

19. Unsweetened coffee and tea

Coffee and [tea](#) are healthy, carb-free drinks.

They contain [caffeine](#), which increases your metabolism and may help improve your physical performance, alertness, and mood ([79](#) ✓, [80](#) ✓, [81](#) ✓).

What's more, coffee and tea drinkers have been shown to have a significantly reduced risk of diabetes. In fact, those with the highest coffee intake have the lowest risk, though a cause and effect relationship has not yet been determined ([82](#)).

Adding heavy cream to coffee or tea is fine, but you'll need to avoid "light" coffee and tea lattes while on keto since they're typically made with nonfat milk and high carb flavorings.

20. Unsweetened sparkling water

If you're looking for a keto-friendly alternative to soda, unsweetened [sparkling water](#) is a great choice.

These beverages are refreshingly fizzy and may be flavored but are generally free of sugar or sweeteners. For that reason, they have no calories or carbs ([83](#) ✓).

However, some varieties are flavored naturally with small amounts of fruit juice, and these may contain carbs. Be sure to [check the label](#), as extra carbs can add up quickly ([84](#) ✓).


SUMMARY

Unsweetened coffee, tea, and sparkling water are good beverages to drink while doing keto.

Is keto right for you?

The low carb, high fat keto diet remains quite popular, and many people find that they enjoy the diet and the results it provides. However, it may not be the right fit for everyone.

Keto is extremely restrictive compared with some other diets, which may cause stress for some people.

Additionally, the keto diet may cause [side effects](#), especially when you're getting started. Some possible side effects can include (85 

- dizziness
- fatigue
- digestive changes
- increased cholesterol levels

If keto isn't a good fit, you may want to try [other healthy eating patterns](#).

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The bottom line

The [keto diet](#) may help with weight loss, blood sugar control, and other health goals. However, its low carb and high fat approach may seem overly restrictive, especially at first.

Nonetheless, this eating pattern accommodates a wide variety of nutritious, tasty, and versatile foods that let you stay within your daily carb range.

To reap all the [health benefits of the keto diet](#), it's best to eat a wide variety of these foods.

Just one thing

Try this today: The importance of tracking your carb count — especially when you first start keto — can't be overstated.

Because it can be hard to estimate the carb count of many foods on your own, a number of [keto apps](#) are available to help you learn more about the carb content of the foods you eat most often.

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NUTRITION

✓ Evidence Based

The Gluten-Free Diet: A Beginner's Guide with Meal Plan

Medically reviewed by [Kathy W. Warwick, R.D., CDE](#), Nutrition — By Ryan Raman, MS, RD and [Rachael Ajmera, MS, RD](#) on March 5, 2023

[What is gluten?](#) [Gluten-related disorders](#) [What to avoid](#)
[What to eat and drink](#) [Sample meal plan](#) [Health benefits](#)
[Potential downsides](#) [6 tips](#) [Bottom line](#)

The protein gluten is found in items like wheat products and may cause digestive symptoms in some people. Find



out who would benefit from a gluten-free diet and get tips on how to enjoy one.

A gluten-free diet involves excluding foods that contain the protein gluten like wheat and rye products.

Most studies on gluten-free diets have involved people with celiac disease. However, gluten in the diet can affect other health conditions like non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS).

Wheat allergy occurs when your body creates antibodies to wheat proteins causing a potentially serious anaphylactic reaction. It's important to see a health professional who's experienced with gastrointestinal issues to help reach the correct diagnosis.

If you have celiac disease, it's important that you avoid gluten completely to help prevent severe discomfort and side effects. If you have NCGS, you may be able to significantly reduce your gluten intake and have a resolution of symptoms (1👍, 2).

Those with wheat allergy will need to avoid any wheat in their diet, which means that may also follow a strict gluten-free diet (3👍).

Here's a complete guide to a gluten-free diet, including a simple sample menu. First, let's start with the basics.

What is gluten?

Gluten is a family of proteins found in wheat, barley, rye, and spelt.

Its name comes from the Latin word for glue. It gives flour a sticky consistency when it's mixed with water (4).

This glue-like property helps gluten create a sticky network that gives bread the ability to rise when baked. It also gives bread a chewy and satisfying texture (5👍).

Some people have uncomfortable gastrointestinal symptoms after eating foods that contain gluten. Severe reactions can occur in people diagnosed with celiac disease.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder in which the body mistakenly attacks itself after exposure to gluten. Celiac disease affects at least 1% of the population in the Western world and can damage the intestines (6👍).

If eating gluten makes you feel uncomfortable, a doctor may recommend [screening for celiac disease](#).

The most common ways to test for celiac disease include:

- **Blood test:** Blood tests are used to look for antibodies that incorrectly interact with the gluten protein. The most common test is the tissue transglutaminase IgA (tTG-IgA) test.
- **Biopsy from your small intestine:** People with a positive blood test will likely need to have a biopsy. During this process, a technician takes a small tissue sample from your intestine. The sample is then checked for damage (7👍).

It's best to get tested for celiac disease before trying a gluten-free diet. Otherwise, it will become hard for the doctor to tell whether you have celiac disease.

People who do not have celiac disease but feel they may be sensitive to gluten might consider trying a strict gluten-free diet for a few weeks to see if their symptoms improve. It's important to seek assistance from a healthcare professional like a dietitian before starting a gluten-free diet.

After a few weeks, you can reintroduce gluten into your diet and test for symptoms. If a gluten-free diet does not help your symptoms, something else is likely causing your digestive issues.

SUMMARY

Gluten is a family of proteins that's found in certain grains. Eating it causes harmful effects in people with celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS). People with wheat allergy also need to avoid products containing any form of wheat.

Most people can eat gluten without experiencing any side effects, but people with celiac disease cannot tolerate it.

People with other disorders like non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS) and wheat allergy frequently avoid gluten too.

Celiac disease

In celiac disease, the body mistakes gluten for a foreign threat. To remove this perceived threat, the body overreacts and attacks the gluten proteins.

This attack also damages surrounding areas, like the gut wall. Not only can this lead to nutrient deficiencies and severe digestive issues, but it can also increase the risk of many harmful diseases (7).

People with celiac disease often experience symptoms such as:

- diarrhea or constipation
- sharp stomach pain
- stomach discomfort
- bloating
- weight loss
- skin rashes

Interestingly, some people with celiac disease do not experience digestive symptoms. Instead, they may experience other symptoms like:

- fatigue
- anemia
- depression

These symptoms are common in many other medical conditions, making celiac disease difficult to diagnose (9).

Non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS)

NCGS is believed to affect around 0.6%–13% of people (1✓).

People diagnosed as having NCGS do not test positive for celiac disease or wheat allergy, but they still feel uncomfortable after eating gluten (10).

Symptoms of NCGS are similar to those of celiac disease and can include (1[✓]):

- stomach pain
- bloating
- changes in bowel movements
- tiredness
- skin rashes

NCGS can be complicated to identify because there are currently no specific lab or tissue tests to diagnose it conclusively.

There have been a few very small studies where people who did not have celiac disease or wheat allergy were given gluten-free or gluten-containing test foods. The participants did not know which test foods they were eating.

When asked to describe symptoms after each challenge, most of the participants were unable to correctly identify gluten-containing test foods. Researchers point out that other triggers besides gluten may be involved (11[✓]).

Also, other irritants like **FODMAPs** may be causing these symptoms. FODMAPs are short-chain carbohydrates that can cause digestive problems. They include fermentable (12):

- oligosaccharides
- disaccharides
- monosaccharides
- polyols

Larger human studies are needed to help pinpoint the possible causes of NCGS. Before going on a gluten-free diet, it's best to consult a healthcare professional with expertise in this area (13).

Following a gluten-free diet without first testing for celiac disease or wheat allergy may delay the proper diagnosis and treatment. If you think gluten makes you uncomfortable, it's best to let a healthcare professional


know. They can help determine whether a gluten-free diet may be beneficial for you.

Gluten ataxia

Similar to celiac disease, gluten ataxia is an autoimmune disorder.

This disorder causes the body's immune system to attack the nervous system in response to gluten ingestion. This can cause a range of neurological symptoms.

In particular, gluten ataxia can cause balance, coordination, and motor control issues.

According to one review, gluten ataxia typically affects individuals over age 50 years and accounts for approximately 15% of all ataxia diagnoses. Ataxias are a group of disorders that affect balance and coordination (14 )

A gluten-free diet is recommended to help reduce symptoms of gluten ataxia and prevent further damage to the nervous system.

Wheat allergies

Wheat allergy is a type of allergic reaction that occurs in response to one or more wheat proteins (15).

It can cause symptoms like:

- hives
- headache
- difficulty breathing
- nasal congestion
- swelling or irritation of the mouth or throat

In severe cases, it can also cause anaphylaxis, an allergic reaction that can be life threatening.

Wheat allergy is most common in children, but approximately 65% of children with wheat allergy outgrow it by age 12 years (16).


Though people with wheat allergy do not necessarily need to avoid gluten specifically, they may need to avoid certain gluten-containing foods. This includes wheat products like bread, pasta, and baked goods.

SUMMARY

Most people can tolerate gluten without any issues. However, people with celiac disease, non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS), gluten ataxia, and wheat allergy may need to avoid foods containing gluten.

What to avoid

Completely avoiding gluten can be challenging, as it's found in many common ingredients that are added to foods and beverages.

Wheat is the main source of gluten in the diet. Wheat-based products include (17 

- wheat bran
- wheat flour
- spelt
- durum
- kamut
- semolina

Other gluten sources include (5 


- barley
- rye
- triticale, a hybrid crop that combines wheat and rye
- malt
- brewer's yeast

Below are some items that may have [gluten-containing ingredients](#) added to them:

- **Bread:** all wheat-based bread
- **Pasta:** all wheat-based pasta
- **Cereals:** most types of cereal, unless they're labeled gluten-free
- **Baked goods:** cakes, cookies, muffins, bread crumbs, pastries
- **Snack foods:** candy, muesli bars, crackers, prepackaged convenience foods, roasted nuts, flavored chips, pretzels
- **Sauces:** soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, hoisin sauce, marinades, salad dressings
- **Beverages:** beer and some flavored alcoholic beverages
- **Other items:** pizza, couscous, broth (unless it's labeled gluten-free)

Many gluten-free products are now widely available, but it is important to read the ingredient section of the food label on most of the foods you buy.

Labels may include additional statements like “processed in a facility that also processes wheat-based foods.” Oats are naturally gluten-free but may be processed with other wheat-containing foods.

[Oats](#) are naturally gluten-free. However, they're often contaminated with gluten, as they might be processed in the same factory as wheat-based foods ([18](#) )

SUMMARY

Completely avoiding gluten can be challenging, as it's found in many common foods and beverages. The best way to completely avoid it is to eat whole, single-ingredient foods or carefully check the ingredient labeling of food products.

What to eat and drink

Gluten-free diets can be expensive and may lack important nutrients if not properly planned. There are plenty of [gluten-free options](#) that will allow you to enjoy healthy and delicious meals. It can be very helpful to work with a registered dietitian to make sure you are meeting all your nutritional needs.

The following items are naturally gluten-free:

- **Meat, fish, and poultry:** all types, except battered or coated meats
- **Eggs:** whole eggs, egg whites, egg yolks
- **Dairy:** unflavored dairy products, including, plain milk, yogurt, and cheese
- **Fruits:** berries, melons, pineapples, bananas, oranges, pears, peaches, etc.
- **Vegetables:** broccoli, tomatoes, onions, peppers, mushrooms, asparagus, carrots, potatoes, etc.
- **Grains:** quinoa, rice, buckwheat, tapioca, sorghum, corn, millet, amaranth, arrowroot, teff, oats (if they're labeled gluten-free)
- **Starches and flours:** potato flour, cornstarch, corn flour, chickpea flour, soy flour, almond meal or flour, coconut flour, tapioca flour
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, walnuts, pistachios, cashews, hemp seeds, chia seeds, flaxseeds, etc.
- **Spreads and oils:** vegetable oils, olive oil, coconut oil, butter, margarine, etc.
- **Herbs and spices:** black pepper, turmeric, oregano, thyme, rosemary, parsley, cilantro, etc.
- **Beverages:** most beverages, except for beer (unless it's labeled gluten-free)

If you're ever unsure if an item contains gluten, it's best to read the nutrition label carefully.

SUMMARY

A gluten-free diet has plenty of options, allowing you to create a variety of nutritious and delicious recipes.

Sample gluten-free meal plan

Here's a sample menu with delicious, [gluten-free meals](#).

Feel free to swap suggestions according to your liking or add extra meals and snacks to fit your needs. [Heartbeet Kitchen](#) offers some excellent recipes for gluten-free [snacks](#) and [entrees](#).

Monday

- **Breakfast:** overnight chia seed pudding with 2 tbsp (30 grams) chia seeds, 1 cup (285 grams) Greek yogurt, 1/2 tsp (2.5 mL) vanilla extract, and sliced fruits of your choice
- **Lunch:** chicken, lentil, and veggie soup
- **Dinner:** steak tacos with steak, mushrooms, and spinach served in gluten-free corn tortillas

Tuesday

- **Breakfast:** omelet with veggies
- **Lunch:** quinoa salad with sliced tomatoes, cucumber, spinach, and avocado
- **Dinner:** shrimp skewers with a garden salad

Wednesday

- **Breakfast:** oatmeal with fresh berries and walnuts
- **Lunch:** tuna salad containing hard-boiled eggs
- **Dinner:** chicken and broccoli stir-fry with olive oil and gluten-free soy or tamari sauce

Thursday

- **Breakfast:** gluten-free toast with avocado and an egg
- **Lunch:** burrito bowl with black beans, rice, guacamole, and fajita veggies

- **Dinner:** garlic and butter shrimp served with a side salad

Friday

- **Breakfast:** banana-berry smoothie with 1/2 medium banana, 1/2 cup (95 grams) mixed berries, 1/4 cup (71 grams) Greek yogurt, and 1/4 cup (59 mL) milk
- **Lunch:** chicken salad wrap, using a gluten-free wrap
- **Dinner:** baked salmon served with baked potatoes, broccoli, carrots, and green beans

Saturday

- **Breakfast:** mushroom and zucchini frittata
- **Lunch:** stuffed bell pepper with ground beef, brown rice, tomatoes, and cheese
- **Dinner:** roasted chicken and veggie quinoa salad

Sunday

- **Breakfast:** two poached eggs with a slice of gluten-free bread
- **Lunch:** chicken salad dressed in olive oil
- **Dinner:** grilled lamb with roasted vegetables

SUMMARY

This sample gluten-free menu provides a variety of healthy food options that are rich in nutrients.

Pros and cons of a gluten-free diet

A gluten-free diet can be expensive to follow and may lack important nutrients if not planned carefully. It's necessary for those with celiac disease or other gluten-related disorders, but it may not be appropriate for everyone.

May help relieve digestive symptoms

Most people try a gluten-free diet to help treat digestive problems. This includes many symptoms like:

- bloating
- diarrhea or constipation
- gas
- fatigue

Research shows that following a gluten-free diet can help ease digestive symptoms for people with celiac disease and NCGS (19).


According to one study involving 856 people with celiac disease, those who did not follow a gluten-free diet experienced significantly more diarrhea, indigestion, and stomach pain compared with those on a gluten-free diet (20).


Can help reduce chronic inflammation in those with celiac disease

Inflammation is a natural process that helps the body treat and heal infection.


Sometimes inflammation can get out of hand and last weeks, months, or even years. This is known as [chronic inflammation](#) and may lead to various health problems in the long run (21).

A gluten-free diet can help reduce chronic inflammation in those with celiac disease.

In fact, a gluten-free diet can help reduce markers of inflammation, like antibody levels, and may also help treat gut damage that gluten-related inflammation in those with celiac disease causes (22 .


People with NCGS may also have low levels of inflammation, but it's not completely clear if a gluten-free diet can help reduce their inflammation (23, 24 .

May help boost energy

People with celiac disease often feel tired or sluggish. They may also experience [brain fog](#), which is characterized by confusion, forgetfulness, and difficulty focusing (8, [25](#) )

These symptoms may result from nutrient deficiencies caused by damage to the gut. For example, an [iron deficiency](#) can lead to anemia, which is common in celiac disease ([26](#)).

If you have celiac disease, switching to a gluten-free diet may help boost your energy levels and relieve tiredness and sluggishness.

According to one literature review, people with celiac disease experienced significantly more fatigue than those without celiac disease. Additionally, five of the seven studies included in the review concluded that following a gluten-free diet was effective at reducing fatigue ([27](#) )

Possible weight changes

You may experience some weight loss when you first start following a gluten-free diet.

Some weight loss may be due to eliminating many processed foods like cookies, cakes, and other snack foods. But some weight loss may occur due to the restrictive nature of the diet or the lack of planned balanced meals.

Gluten-free options do not always mean they are “healthy” or “nutritious.” Some processed gluten-free products like cakes, pastries, and snacks can be high in calories with few nutrients. They can cause weight gain if they’re eaten regularly.

A gluten-free diet is not considered a weight loss diet. It’s important that everyone focus on eating more fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, dairy, and healthy fats in place of more highly processed foods.

SUMMARY

A gluten-free diet is important for those with celiac disease and other gluten-related disorders. It can help ease digestive

symptoms, reduce inflammation, and boost energy. It should not be considered a weight loss diet.

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Potential downsides of a gluten-free diet


A gluten-free diet could lead to nutritional deficiencies and may have downsides for those who do not have a diagnosis that requires elimination of gluten.


Risk of a nutritional deficiency




People who have celiac disease are at risk of several [nutrient deficiencies](#), including deficiencies in [\(28\)](#):

- fiber
- iron
- calcium
- zinc
- folate (vitamin B9)
- vitamin B12
- vitamin D

Interestingly, studies have also found that following a gluten-free diet may not help treat nutritional deficiencies [\(29](#) , [30\)](#).

This may be because many gluten-free food products are often lower in protein and fiber yet higher in saturated fat, sodium, and carbohydrates compared with their gluten-containing counterparts [\(31](#) ).


Moreover, many gluten-free versions of foods are not fortified with B vitamins like folate.

Since fortified bread is a major source of B vitamins, people on a gluten-free diet may be at risk of vitamin B deficiencies. This is especially concerning for pregnant people with celiac disease, as B vitamins are vital for fetal growth and development [\(32](#) ).

Working with a registered dietitian can help you plan balanced meals that meet your nutritional needs. Vitamin and mineral supplementation may be recommended for those unable to get adequate amounts of these nutrients.

Constipation

Constipation is a common side effect of a gluten-free diet.

Gluten-free diets eliminate many popular sources of fiber like bread, bran, and other wheat-based products. Eating a fiber-rich diet may help [promote healthy bowel movements](#) [\(29](#) , [33\)](#).

In addition, many gluten-free substitutes for wheat-based products are low in fiber. This could be another reason why constipation is common on a gluten-free diet (34👍).

If you experience constipation on a gluten-free diet, aim to eat more fiber-rich foods like:

- broccoli
- beans
- lentils
- Brussels sprouts
- berries

Cost

Following a gluten-free diet can be difficult on a tight budget.

Research shows that gluten-free foods are almost 2 1/2 times more expensive than their regular counterparts (19).

This is because gluten-free products cost manufacturers more money to make. For example, gluten-free foods must pass stricter testing and avoid cross-contamination.

If you're on a tight budget, you might consider trying to choose fresh produce items when they're in season, using frozen or canned fruits and veggies, which are nutritious and affordable, buying grain items in bulk, and using beans and legumes as high fiber protein choices to help save money.

Can make socializing difficult

Many social situations revolve around food.

This can make it difficult to socialize if you're following a gluten-free diet. While many restaurants have gluten-free options, there's still a risk of food being contaminated with traces of gluten (35).

Celiac disease is also associated with a significant social burden, which can make traveling and eating at restaurants more challenging (36).

That said, you can still socialize while following a gluten-free diet. It simply requires a little extra preparation beforehand.

For example, if you're eating out, consider calling the restaurant beforehand to see if they have gluten-free options. If you're going to a social gathering, consider eating ahead of time or bringing your own food.

SUMMARY

People who follow a gluten-free diet may be at risk of nutritional deficiencies and prone to constipation. Following a gluten-free diet can also be more expensive compared with eating a gluten-containing diet and may make social situations difficult.

Helpful tips

These tips can help you follow a gluten-free diet successfully:

- **Reading food labels:** Practice reading [food labels](#) so you can easily identify gluten-free foods.
- **Telling your friends:** If your friends know that you're following a gluten-free diet, they're more likely to choose places with gluten-free options when you eat out.
- **Buying a gluten-free cookbook:** Reading [gluten-free cookbooks](#) may help you be more creative with your cooking and make meals more enjoyable.
- **Planning ahead:** If you're traveling, researching places to eat and shop can be helpful. Otherwise, plan your diet around plenty of whole, single-ingredient foods like fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.
- **Using separate cooking utensils:** If you share a kitchen with friends or family members, make sure you use separate cooking and cleaning equipment. This can help prevent cross-contamination to avoid negative side effects.
- **Bringing your own food:** If you're visiting family, consider taking foods like gluten-free bread and pasta with you to help you feel

more included in family meals.

If you do not have celiac disease or gluten sensitivity, there's no need to follow a gluten-free diet. While it has many health benefits, it may not be suitable for everyone.

SUMMARY

Though certain situations may arise that can make it hard to stick to a gluten-free diet, taking steps like reading food labels and planning ahead can help.

The bottom line

Most people can eat gluten without any negative effects.

Those with celiac disease, NCGS, and other gluten-related disorders need to avoid it, as it can cause harmful symptoms.

While a gluten-free diet can be restrictive, there are plenty of nutritious and delicious options available.

Eating more fruits, vegetables, lean protein, dairy, and healthy fats can enhance overall health, and with careful planning, it can meet your nutritional needs. Supplements may still be needed, so working with a healthcare professional like a registered dietitian can be very helpful in creating a dietary plan that meets your needs.

A gluten-free diet may provide many health benefits, especially if you have celiac disease or a gluten-related disorder.

If you do, following a gluten-free diet can help ease digestive symptoms, reduce inflammation, and boost your energy levels.

Just one thing

Try this today: Though transitioning to a gluten-free diet can be challenging, there are lots of delicious and nutritious foods you

can enjoy. [Check out this article](#) for a comprehensive list of over 50 gluten-free items you can easily add to your diet.

healthline

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Our experts continually monitor the health and wellness space, and we update our articles when new information becomes available.

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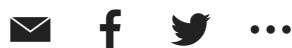
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NUTRITION

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The Paleo Diet — A Beginner's Guide Plus Meal Plan



[Meal plan](#) [Foods to avoid](#) [Foods to eat](#) [Modified paleo diets](#)
[Sensible indulgences](#) [What to drink](#) [Risks and downsides](#)
[One-week plan](#) [Snacks](#) [Shopping list](#) [Restaurant meals](#)
[Bottom line](#)

The paleo diet is designed to resemble what human hunter-gatherer ancestors ate thousands of years ago.

Although it's impossible to know exactly what human ancestors ate in different parts of the world, researchers believe their diets consisted of whole foods.

By following a diet of whole foods and leading physically active lives, hunter-gatherers presumably had much lower rates of lifestyle diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

In fact, [several studies](#) suggest that this diet can lead to significant [weight loss](#) (without calorie counting) and major improvements in health.

Anthropologists also speculate that the paleo diet influenced anatomic and physiologic changes in humans, including an increase in brain size and reduction in gastrointestinal tract size ([✓1](#)).

This article is a basic introduction to the paleo diet, providing a simple meal plan and other essential information.

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available at the time and where in the world they lived.

Some ate a [low-carb diet](#) high in animal foods, while others followed a high carb diet with lots of plants ([1](#)). Some even ate insects, but fortunately, this delicacy is not included in today's modern interpretation of the paleo diet.

The paleo diet includes meat, fish, eggs, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, herbs, spices, healthy fats, and oils ([2](#) [✓](#)).



Foods to avoid include processed foods, sugar, soft drinks, artificial sweeteners, and trans fats. Foods to limit include grains, most dairy products, and legumes (2 🍷).

However, it's important to consider the above as general guidelines, not something written in stone. You can adapt all of this to your own personal needs and preferences.

SUMMARY

Paleolithic humans' diets varied depending on availability and location. The basic concept of the paleo diet is to eat whole foods and avoid processed foods.

Foods to avoid on the paleo diet

The paleo diet discourages consumption of certain foods, including:

- **Sugar and high-fructose corn syrup:** soft drinks, fruit juices, table sugar, candy, pastries, ice cream, and many others
- **Grains:** breads, pastas, wheat, cereal, spelt, rye, barley, etc.
- **Legumes:** beans, lentils, and many more
- **Dairy:** most dairy, especially low fat dairy (some versions of paleo do include full-fat dairy like butter and cheese)
- **Some vegetable oils:** soybean oil, sunflower oil, cottonseed oil, corn oil, grapeseed oil, safflower oil, and others
- **Artificial sweeteners:** aspartame, sucralose, cyclamates, saccharin, acesulfame potassium (use [natural sweeteners](#) instead)
- **Highly processed foods:** everything labeled “diet” or “low fat” or that has many additives, including artificial meal replacements

A simple guideline for the paleo diet is, if it looks like it was made in a factory, don't eat it.

If you want to avoid these ingredients, you must [read ingredients lists](#) and nutrition labels, even on foods that are labeled as “health foods.”

SUMMARY

Foods to avoid on the paleo diet include processed foods and ingredients, like sugar, bread, certain vegetable oils, trans fats, and artificial sweeteners.

Foods to eat on the paleo diet

There's a variety of whole, unprocessed foods you can eat on the paleo diet. This includes:

- **Meat:** Beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, pork, and others
- **Fish and seafood:** salmon, trout, haddock, shrimp, shellfish, etc (choose wild-caught if you can)
- **Eggs:** may be free-range, pastured, or omega-3 enriched
- **Vegetables:** broccoli, kale, peppers, onions, carrots, tomatoes, etc.
- **Fruits:** apples, bananas, oranges, pears, avocados, strawberries, blueberries, and more.
- **Tubers:** potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, turnips, etc.
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and more
- **Healthy fats and oils:** extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil, and others
- **Salt and spices:** sea salt, garlic, turmeric, rosemary, etc.

Many people prefer to choose grass-fed meats, pastured eggs, and organic produce while following a paleo diet. However, this is not required.

SUMMARY

Eat whole, unprocessed foods like meat, seafood, eggs, veggies, fruits, potatoes, nuts, healthy fats, and spices while on the paleo diet. If possible, choose grass-fed and organic products.

Modified paleo diets

Over the past few years, the paleo community has evolved quite a bit.

There are now several different versions of the paleo diet. Some of them allow a few more modern foods, such as grass-fed butter and [gluten-free grains](#) like rice.




Today, many people think of paleo as a template to base your diet on, not necessarily a strict set of rules that you must follow.

SUMMARY

You can also use the paleo diet as a starting point, adding in a few other healthy foods like grass-fed butter and gluten-free grains.

Sensible indulgences

While following a paleo diet, the below foods and beverages below are perfectly fine in small amounts:


- **Wine:** Quality red wine is not only part of the paleo diet, but it is high in antioxidants, [polyphenols](#) and beneficial nutrients ([3](#) , [4](#)).
- **Dark chocolate:** Dark chocolate is very high in antioxidants and important minerals, like magnesium and iron ([3](#) , [5](#) , [6](#)). Choose a product that has 70% or higher cocoa content.


SUMMARY

When following the paleo diet, you can indulge in small amounts of red wine and dark chocolate from time to time.

What to drink on the paleo diet

When it comes to hydration, water should be your go-to beverage.

The following drinks aren't exactly paleo, but are typically accepted as beverages you can consume as part of the diet (3 ):

- **Tea.** Tea, especially green tea, is very healthy and loaded with antioxidants and various beneficial compounds (7).
- **Coffee.** Coffee is actually very high in antioxidants as well. Studies show that it has many [health benefits](#) (8 ).

SUMMARY

Make water your drink of choice when following the paleo diet. Many people also drink tea and coffee.

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Risks and downsides

While there are many benefits to the paleo diet, there are also some drawbacks.

For example, the paleo diet eliminates several food groups that are highly nutritious, including legumes, dairy, and gluten-containing grains.

Legumes are rich in fiber, protein, and a variety of micronutrients including iron, zinc, and copper (9), while dairy products have essential nutrients like calcium, which is important for bone health (10).

Eliminating these food groups altogether can put individuals following a paleo diet at risk of developing nutrient deficiencies.

In addition, legumes are one of the primary sources of protein in the vegan and vegetarian diet, which may make the paleo diet unrealistic for [vegans and vegetarians](#) (11).


The paleo diet includes foods that are high in fiber, like vegetables, fruits, and nuts. Since foods high in fiber can have a laxative effect, a person transitioning from a low fiber diet to a paleo diet could experience gastric distress, such as bloating, as a result (12 , 13).

It's important to recognize that there's no one "right" way to eat for everyone, so while the paleo diet may work for people you know, it may not be best for you.

Talk to your doctor and/or nutritionist before starting a paleo diet.

SUMMARY





The paleo diet eliminates several food groups that are highly nutritious, and may cause diarrhea or fatigue. Ask your doctor if the paleo diet is right for you.

A sample paleo menu for 1 week

This sample menu contains a balanced amount of paleo-friendly foods.

By all means, adjust this menu based on your own preferences.

Monday

- **Breakfast:** eggs and vegetables fried in olive oil, one piece of fruit
- **Lunch:** chicken salad with olive oil, a handful of nuts
- **Dinner:** burgers (no bun) fried in butter, vegetables, salsa

Tuesday

- **Breakfast:** bacon, eggs, one piece of fruit
- **Lunch:** leftover burgers from the night before
- **Dinner:** baked salmon with vegetables

Wednesday

- **Breakfast:** leftover salmon and vegetables from the night before
- **Lunch:** sandwich in a lettuce leaf, with meat and fresh vegetables
- **Dinner:** ground beef stir-fry with vegetables, berries

Thursday

- **Breakfast:** eggs, one piece of fruit
- **Lunch:** leftover stir-fry from the night before, a handful of nuts
- **Dinner:** fried pork, vegetables

Friday

- **Breakfast:** eggs and vegetables fried in olive oil, one piece of fruit

- **Lunch:** chicken salad with olive oil, a handful of nuts
- **Dinner:** steak, vegetables, sweet potatoes

Saturday

- **Breakfast:** bacon, eggs, one piece of fruit
- **Lunch:** leftover steak and vegetables from the night before
- **Dinner:** baked tilapia, vegetables, avocado

Sunday

- **Breakfast:** leftover salmon and vegetables from the night before
- **Lunch:** sandwich in a lettuce leaf, with meat and fresh vegetables
- **Dinner:** grilled chicken wings, vegetables, salsa

SUMMARY

You can make a variety of delicious meals using paleo-friendly foods. Above is a sample menu of what 1 week on the paleo diet might look like.

Simple paleo snacks

If you get hungry between meals, there are plenty of paleo snacks that are simple, and easily portable:

- Toasted almonds
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Fresh fruits and vegetables, including baby carrots, celery sticks, and sliced apples
- Meat jerky
- Dairy-free chia pudding

SUMMARY

Paleo snacks are easy to prepare and take with you on the go. A few ideas include fruit, nuts, hard-boiled eggs, or baby carrots.

Simple paleo shopping list

There is an incredible variety of foods you can eat on the paleo diet.

This simple shopping list should give you an idea of how to get started:

- **Meat:** beef, lamb, pork, etc.
- **Poultry:** chicken, turkey, etc.
- **Fish:** salmon, trout, mackerel, etc.
- **Eggs**
- **Fresh vegetables:** greens, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, onions, etc.
- **Frozen vegetables:** broccoli, spinach, various vegetable mixes, etc.
- **Fruits:** apples, bananas, pears, oranges, avocado
- **Berries:** strawberries, blueberries, etc.
- **Nuts:** almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts
- **Almond butter**
- **Olive oil**
- **Olives**
- **Sweet potatoes**
- **Condiments:** sea salt, pepper, turmeric, garlic, parsley, etc.

SUMMARY

To get started on the paleo diet, use the shopping list above to stock your pantry and fridge with delicious, paleo-friendly foods

How to make restaurant meals paleo

It is fairly easy to make most restaurant meals paleo-friendly.

Here are some simple guidelines:

1. Order a meat- or fish-based main dish.
2. Get extra vegetables instead of bread or rice.
3. Ask for your food to be cooked in olive oil or avocado oil.

SUMMARY

Eating out while following the paleo diet doesn't have to be hard. Simply select a meat or fish dish on the menu and swap in some extra veggies.

The bottom line

The paleo diet is modeled after what hunter-gatherers are believed to have followed. While there is no one way to follow the paleo diet, the basic idea is to avoid processed foods and focus instead on [healthy, whole foods](#).

Paleo-friendly foods include meat, fish, eggs, seeds, nuts, fruits, and veggies, along with healthy fats and oils. Avoid processed foods, grains, and sugar.

You can also base your diet on paleo foods, adding in a few modern healthy foods like grass-fed butter and gluten-free grains.

To get started on the paleo diet, check out the sample menu and shopping list above and stock your kitchen and pantry with these healthy, paleo-friendly foods.

Last medically reviewed on February 16, 2023

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 [HISTORY](#)



Our experts continually monitor the health and wellness space, and we update our articles when new information becomes available.

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NUTRITION

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What Is the Ayurvedic Diet? Benefits, Downsides, and More

Medically reviewed by [Jillian Kubala, MS, RD](#), Nutrition — By [Rachael Ajmera, MS, RD](#) — Updated on February 12, 2023



The Ayurvedic diet is an eating pattern that's been around for thousands of years. It's based on the principles of Ayurvedic medicine and focuses on balancing different types of energy within your body, which is said to improve health.

Unlike many other diets, the Ayurvedic diet provides personalized recommendations about which foods to eat and avoid based on your body type.

It's also popular because it's not only said to promote better health for your body but also your mind.

This article reviews all you need to know about the Ayurvedic diet, including its benefits, downsides, and foods to eat and avoid.

Dulin/Getty Images

What is the Ayurvedic diet?

Ayurveda is a form of holistic medicine from India that focuses on promoting balance between your body and mind.

According to Ayurveda, five elements make up the universe — vayu (air), jala (water), akash (space), teja (fire), and prithvi (earth).

These elements are believed to form three different doshas, which are defined as types of energy that circulate within your body. Each dosha is responsible for specific physiological functions.

For example, the pitta dosha controls hunger, thirst, and body temperature. Meanwhile, the vata dosha maintains [electrolyte balance](#) and movement, while the kapha dosha promotes joint function (1[✓]).

The Ayurvedic diet is a component of Ayurveda and has been practiced for thousands of years. It's based on determining your dominant dosha and eating specific foods to promote balance between all three doshas.

How does it work?

The Ayurvedic diet is a type of eating plan that sets guidelines for when, how, and what you should eat based on your dosha, or body type.

Here are some of the main characteristics for each dosha to help you determine which type matches you best:

- **Pitta (fire + water).** Intelligent, hard-working, and decisive. This dosha generally has a medium physical build, short temper, and may suffer from conditions like indigestion, heart disease, or high blood pressure.
- **Vata (air + space).** Creative, energetic, and lively. People with this dosha are usually thin with a light frame and may struggle with digestive issues, fatigue, or anxiety when out of balance.
- **Kapha (earth + water).** Naturally calm, grounded, and loyal. Those with a kapha dosha often have a sturdier frame and may have issues with weight gain, asthma, depression, or diabetes.

According to this diet, your dosha determines which foods you should eat to promote inner balance.

For example, the pitta dosha focuses on cooling, energizing foods and limits spices, nuts, and seeds.

Meanwhile, the vata dosha favors warm, moist, and grounding foods while restricting [dried fruits](#), bitter herbs, and raw veggies.

Finally, the kapha dosha limits heavy foods like nuts, seeds, and oils in favor of fruits, veggies, and legumes.

Red meat, artificial sweeteners, and processed ingredients are limited for all three doshas. Instead, the Ayurvedic diet encourages eating healthy whole foods.

SUMMARY

The Ayurvedic diet is an eating pattern focused on promoting balance within your body by following guidelines for your specific dosha, or body type.

Benefits




Here are a few of the potential benefits of the Ayurvedic Diet.

Encourages whole foods

Although the Ayurvedic diet has specific guidelines for each dosha, the diet as a whole encourages eating [whole foods](#) like fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes.

This can benefit your health greatly, as these foods are rich in many essential nutrients.

The diet also minimizes processed foods, which often lack [fiber](#) and important vitamins and minerals.

Studies show that eating higher amounts of processed foods may be associated with a higher risk of heart disease, cancer, and even death ([2](#) , [3](#) , [4](#) ).

Thus, the Ayurvedic diet may help protect against chronic disease and promote better health. However, more studies are needed.

Could promote weight loss

Given that the Ayurvedic diet emphasizes nutrient-rich whole foods, it might [boost weight loss](#).

While limited research is available on the Ayurvedic diet and weight loss, some studies have found that it may be effective in this regard.

For example, one study in 200 people with pitta or kapha doshas showed that following the Ayurvedic diet for three months led to significant weight loss. These people supposedly tend to be heavier than those with vata doshas (5 ✓).

Another small study found that following an Ayurveda-based lifestyle modification program, which included dietary changes and yoga classes, resulted in an average weight loss of 13 pounds (6 kg) over 9 months (6 ✓).

A small 2019 study found that people who followed an an Ayurvedic diet and practiced yoga three times per week for 3 months experienced an average weight loss of 5.6 kg and continued to lose weight afterward (7 ✓).

That said, large, high-quality studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ayurvedic diet for weight loss in the general population.

Promotes mindfulness

In addition to what foods you eat, mindfulness is another major part of the Ayurvedic diet.

Mindfulness is a practice that involves paying close attention to how you feel in the present.

In particular, [mindful eating](#) emphasizes minimizing distractions during meals to focus on the taste, texture, and smell of your food.

According to one small study in 10 people, practicing mindful eating reduced body weight, depression, stress, and binge eating (8 ✓).

Mindful eating may also enhance self-control and promote a healthy relationship with food (9👍).

SUMMARY

The Ayurvedic diet emphasizes eating whole foods, which can improve your overall health and boost weight loss. The diet also encourages mindful eating, a practice that may promote a healthy relationship with food.

Downsides

Although there are several benefits associated with the Ayurvedic diet, there are drawbacks to consider.

Here are a few of the potential downsides of the Ayurvedic diet.

Can be confusing

One of the major issues with the Ayurvedic diet is that it can be confusing and difficult to follow.

Not only are there specific food lists for each dosha but also many additional rules to follow.

For example, the recommendations regarding which foods you should eat and avoid change throughout the year based on the season.

There are also suggestions for when, how often, and how much you should eat, which can be challenging — especially for those just getting started on the diet.

May feel overly restrictive

On the Ayurvedic diet, there are extensive lists of foods that you are advised to eat or avoid depending on your dosha.

This can mean cutting out healthy, whole foods or entire food groups that are thought to aggravate specific doshas.

Other ingredients like red meat or processed foods are also left out, which may require you to make significant modifications to your current diet.

This can feel overly restrictive and less flexible than other meal plans and may make it difficult to [stick to the diet long term](#).

Often subjective

Another issue with the Ayurvedic diet is that it's subjective.

The diet is centered around determining your dominant dosha, which is based on a set of physical and mental traits.

Although there are plenty of guidelines and online quizzes available to help ease the process, figuring out your dosha is not foolproof.

As the recommendations for the diet are tailored to each dosha, choosing the incorrect dosha could negatively impact your results.


Furthermore, no evidence currently supports the concept of doshas or the claim that your personality traits determine which foods you should eat and avoid.

Therefore, it's unclear how beneficial the diet is, even if you correctly determine your dosha.

SUMMARY

The Ayurvedic diet can be confusing and may feel overly restrictive, especially as you start out. Also, the theory of doshas is subjective and not based on scientific evidence.

Foods to eat

In Ayurveda, foods are categorized based on their physical qualities and the way they are said to affect your body. This helps determine which ingredients work best for different doshas (10 )

Below are some of the foods you should eat based on your specific dosha.

Pitta

- **Protein:** poultry in small amounts, egg whites, tofu
- **Dairy:** milk, [ghee](#), butter
- **Fruits:** sweet, fully ripe fruits like oranges, pears, pineapples, bananas, melons, and mangoes
- **Vegetables:** sweet and bitter veggies, including cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, zucchini, leafy greens, sweet potatoes, carrots, squash, and Brussels sprouts
- **Legumes:** chickpeas, lentils, mung beans, lima beans, black beans, kidney beans
- **Grains:** barley, [oats](#), basmati rice, wheat
- **Nuts and seeds:** small amounts of pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, sunflower seeds, coconut
- **Herbs and spices:** small amounts of black pepper, cumin, cinnamon, cilantro, dill, turmeric

Vata

- **Protein:** small amounts of poultry, seafood, tofu
- **Dairy:** milk, butter, yogurt, cheese, ghee
- **Fruits:** fully ripe, sweet, and heavy fruits, such as bananas, [blueberries](#), strawberries, grapefruit, mangoes, peaches, and plums
- **Vegetables:** cooked vegetables, including beets, sweet potatoes, onions, radishes, turnips, carrots, and green beans
- **Legumes:** chickpeas, lentils, mung beans
- **Grains:** cooked oats, cooked rice
- **Nuts and seeds:** any, including [almonds](#), walnuts, pistachios, chia seeds, flax seeds, and sunflower seeds

- **Herbs and spices:** cardamom, ginger, cumin, basil, cloves, oregano, thyme, black pepper

Kapha

- **Protein:** poultry in small amounts, seafood, egg whites
- **Dairy:** skim milk, goat milk, soy milk
- **Fruits:** apples, blueberries, pears, pomegranates, cherries, and dried fruit like raisins, figs, and prunes
- **Vegetables:** asparagus, leafy greens, onions, potatoes, mushrooms, radishes, okra
- **Legumes:** any, including black beans, chickpeas, lentils, and navy beans
- **Grains:** oats, rye, buckwheat, barley, corn, millet
- **Nuts and seeds:** small amounts of pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, flax seeds
- **Herbs and spices:** any, including cumin, black pepper, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, basil, oregano, and thyme

SUMMARY

Depending on your dosha, there are specific guidelines regarding which foods to eat as part of an Ayurvedic diet.

Foods to avoid

Here are some of the foods you should limit or avoid based on your dosha.

Pitta

- **Proteins:** red meat, seafood, egg yolks
- **Dairy:** sour cream, cheese, buttermilk
- **Fruits:** sour or unripe fruits, such as grapes, apricots, papaya, grapefruit, and sour cherries

- **Vegetables:** chili peppers, beets, tomatoes, onions, eggplant
- **Grains:** brown rice, millet, corn, rye
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, cashews, peanuts, pine nuts, pistachios, [walnuts](#), sesame seeds
- **Herbs and spices:** any spices not included in the list above

Vata

- **Proteins:** [red meat](#)
- **Fruits:** dried, unripe, or light fruits, such as raisins, cranberries, pomegranates, and pears
- **Vegetables:** any raw vegetables, as well as cooked broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, mushrooms, potatoes, and tomatoes
- **Legumes:** beans, such as black beans, kidney beans, and navy beans
- **Grains:** buckwheat, barley, rye, wheat, corn, quinoa, millet
- **Herbs and spices:** bitter or astringent herbs like parsley, thyme, and coriander seed

Kapha

- **Proteins:** red meat, [shrimp](#), egg yolks
- **Fruits:** bananas, coconuts, mangoes, fresh figs
- **Vegetables:** sweet potatoes, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers
- **Legumes:** soybeans, kidney beans, miso
- **Grains:** rice, wheat, cooked cereal
- **Nuts and seeds:** cashews, pecans, pine nuts, Brazil nuts, sesame seeds, walnuts

SUMMARY

Based on your dosha, the Ayurvedic diet recommends that you limit or avoid certain foods.

The bottom line

The Ayurvedic diet is a meal plan based on the principles of Ayurvedic medicine, a form of traditional medicine originating on the Indian subcontinent dating back thousands of years.

The diet involves eating or restricting certain foods based on your dosha, or body type, which is claimed to boost weight loss and support mindfulness.

However, it can be confusing and restrictive, and it's based on subjective assumptions about your personality and body type. Plus, its theories are not supported by scientific evidence.

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How we reviewed this article:

HISTORY

Our experts continually monitor the health and wellness space, and we update our articles when new information becomes available.

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Jul 31, 2019

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