



Don't Be Fooled by Fad Diets

Your friend lost 20 pounds on Paleo. Your neighbor is raving about her juice cleanse (on day 2). Ads for these diets and countless others pop up when you're surfing the internet or flipping through magazines. Their weight loss claims are tempting: "Eat as much as you want—and still lose weight!" or "Drop 10 pounds in 2 days!" With 54 percent of Americans actively trying to lose weight, it's no surprise that some will be lured by these promises. So, what's the "real" deal? Do these diets work – even a little bit?

Most Diets Work (Over the Short Run)

*Whether it's low-carb, sugar-free, gluten-free, or raw food, no matter what diet you choose, if you take in fewer calories than you burn, you'll lose weight. (Remember the energy balance formula from from the Tip the Weight- Loss Scales In Your Favor session?) Fad diets make it particularly easy to lose because you cut out entire food groups, like bread and other starches. (Or, with juice fasts, everything **but** juice.)*

But hardly anyone can stand these diets for long, so people return to their old ways and often gain back even more weight. **In fact, there's a name for this: "Abstinence Violation Effect."** You try to *abstain* from bread, pineapple, or other foods the diet bans. But you feel deprived and consume a "forbidden" food (in *violation* of the diet), which makes you feel guilty and ashamed. These emotions

actually drive you to eat *more* forbidden foods, go completely off the diet and resume your old way of eating—sometimes with a vengeance!

Curious about what fad diets are trying to sell you? Let's consider a few of the most popular—and take a close look at what the research says.



WEIGHT-LOSS
ROLLER COASTER



The Paleo Diet

The Claim

By eating foods of our hunter-gatherer ancestors (before the time of agriculture), you'll lose weight, reduce risk of chronic diseases, and become healthier.

What You Eat

- Meat (some plans specify grass-fed)
- Seafood
- Eggs
- Fruits and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Oils (some versions specifically call for cold-pressed oils like avocado, olive, and walnut oils, and favor a balanced ratio of omega-6 and omega-3 fats)

What You Don't Eat

- Cereal, bread, rice and other grains (including whole grains)
- Legumes
- Dairy
- Sugar
- Potatoes
- Processed foods

The Low-down

Paleo is based on shaky science—our prehistoric ancestors did not have one uniform diet, and there's no good reason to ban legumes and whole grains, which have actually been linked to weight loss! And be honest: Do you want to spend the rest of your days deprived of any bread or other starches? (Talk about "abstinence violation effect!")



The paleo diet is sometimes referred to as the "caveman diet," based on the theory that it mirrors the eating patterns of early man.

Juice Cleanses

The Claim

By eliminating all solid foods and drinking juice for days, weeks or even longer, you'll lose weight, detoxify your body, clean your intestines, boost energy, increase mental clarity, and improve your complexion. (Just to name a few!)

What You Eat

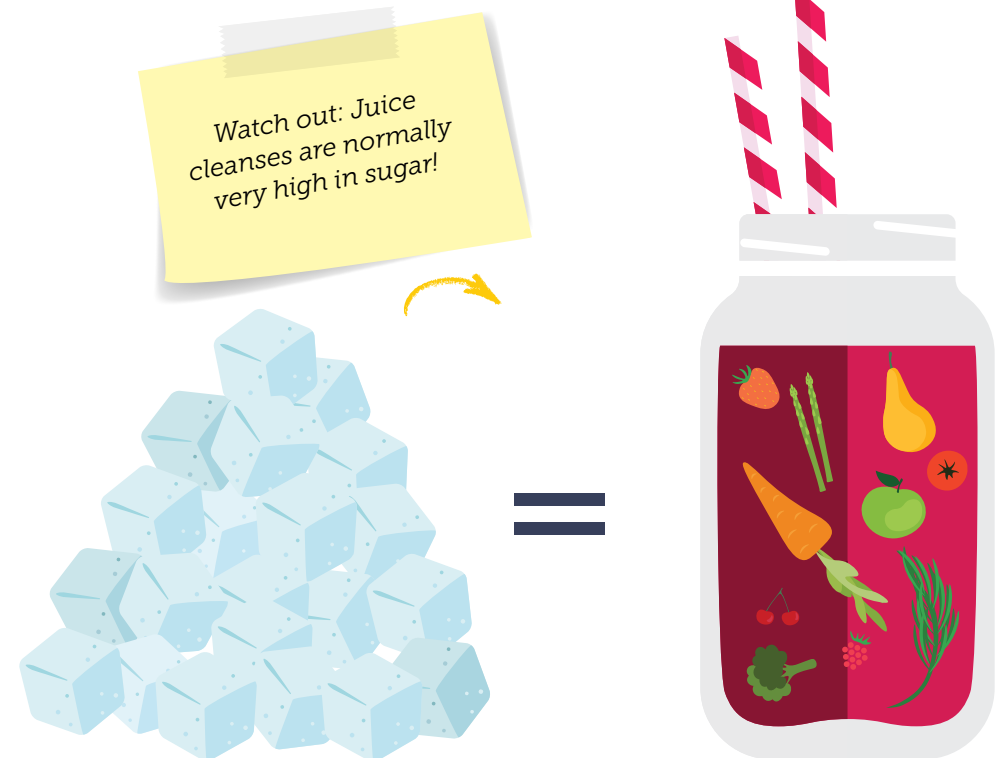
Fruit juice, vegetable juice or a mix of the two. Juice can be store-bought or made at home with a juicer. Juice cleanse brands offer "programs," which suggest that you drink about six bottles of their juice daily (many of which add up to less than 1,000 calories).

What You Don't Eat

Most ban anything but juice.

The Low-down

Of course you'll lose weight if you consume fewer than 1,000 calories every day! But you'll never be able to sustain it, and if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes, all that sugar could be dangerous. And the detox claims are, to be polite, total hogwash! (See "Is it a fad—or a good fix?" on page 54 for more.)



Raw Foods

The Claim

Our bodies are designed to eat foods raw, and heating food destroys nutrients. Foods that need to be cooked—such as meat and grains—cause chronic diseases, and should be avoided. This diet prevents “toxins” from building up in the colon (and elsewhere in the body), controls weight and staves off chronic diseases.

What You Eat

Any uncooked and unprocessed food.

Some raw food diets are vegan—based on just fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds—while others include raw (unpasteurized) milk, meat and seafood.

What You Don't Eat

Nothing heated. That means no cooked meat, poultry or fish, no cooked grains, no bread—literally, nothing that gets cooked in any way.

The Low-down

Sure, raw fruits and vegetables are good for you—but so are a lot of cooked foods! In fact, you absorb certain nutrients (such as beta-carotene) better in cooked food. While the strong emphasis on fruits and vegetables seems extremely healthy, studies show that eating raw can lead to low bone density (which can lead to osteoporosis) and vitamin B12 deficiency. This nutrient is found only in foods of animal origin, and a deficiency can lead to permanent brain damage.

Also, it's hugely expensive and time consuming. You either have to spend untold hours washing and cutting up mounds of produce yourself (and who has the time?) or buy it—which can be incredibly expensive.



Eating raw can lead to low bone density and vitamin B12 deficiency.

Intermittent Fasting or Other Types of Cycling Diets

The Claim

By alternating days of virtually no calories (usually just water and tea) or very few calories (500 calories or so) with days of eating at your “normal” calorie level, you’ll lose weight and cut risk of chronic disease. For example, *The Fast Diet* (Atria 2014), prescribes five “normal days” as well as two “fast days,” in which you eat just a quarter the amount of calories as on normal days.

What You Eat

Varies by diet. *The Fast Diet* encourages fish, meat and vegetables on fast days; and any foods on normal days.

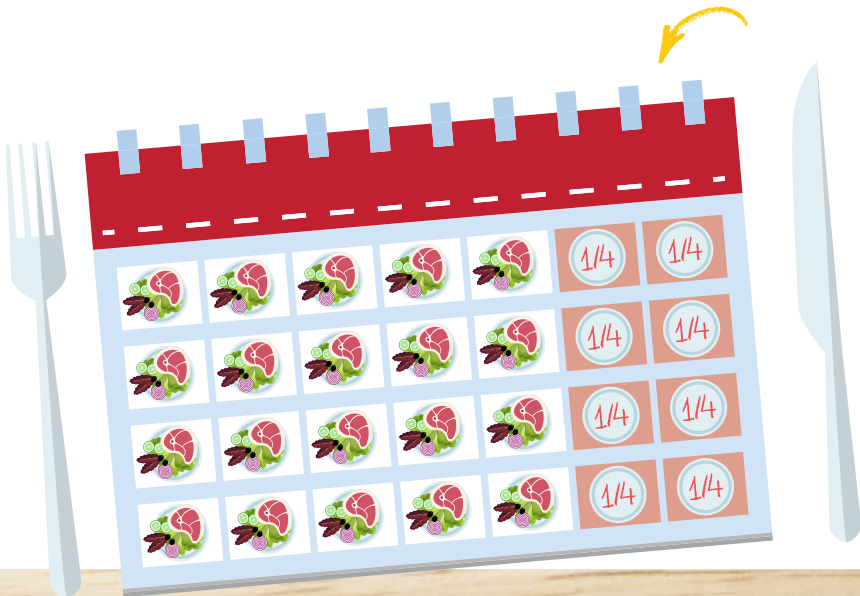
What You Don't Eat

Varies by diet. No forbidden foods on *The Fast Diet*, but a few of these plans are low carb and ban most starches.

The Low-down

Intermittent fasting has been shown to improve blood pressure and cholesterol. However, researchers have noted the diet is difficult to sustain long-term because people get so hungry on the low calorie days. So far, there aren’t enough long-term studies to recommend this way of eating—stay tuned for more research.

You alternate between days of few (or even no) calories and normal calorie consumption!



Gluten-free



The Claim

Even if you don't have a medical reason* to shun gluten, a protein found in certain grains, doing so will help you lose weight, quell appetite, improve digestion, sharpen your brain, and help prevent allergies, diabetes, arthritis and other diseases.

* The conditions are:

- Celiac disease, thought to affect about 1% of the population, caused when gluten triggers an immune response that damages the intestines.
- Non-celiac gluten sensitivity, which does not damage intestines, but causes symptoms such as bloating and headache.

What You Eat

Anything that doesn't contain gluten.



Gluten-containing grains: barley, rye, spelt, triticale, wheat. (However, the popular *Wheat Belly Diet* forbids other grains as well.) You also wind up avoiding a whole host of foods that contain tiny amounts of gluten (usually because these foods contain starch), such as soy sauce, candy, cream-based soups and lots of processed foods.

The Low-down

If you have celiac, you must completely avoid gluten; with non-celiac gluten sensitivity, you might be able to get away with tiny amounts. Also, there's evidence that avoiding gluten may improve symptoms of lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, dermatitis herpetiformis (a skin disorder), irritable bowel syndrome, thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid gland), type 1 diabetes and psoriasis.

But if you don't have these conditions, there are probably no health reasons to forego gluten.

And cutting out bread and other gluten-containing foods would not help you lose weight if you turn to the shelves of gluten-free (but not necessarily low-cal) cereals, chips, cookies and other baked goods to take their place.

Bulletproof

The Claim

A very high fat diet that's moderate in protein and low in carbohydrates will make you lose weight with "zero hunger and zero cravings" and increase energy and brain power.

What You Eat

Foods are classified as:

- Bulletproof—the foods that should comprise the bulk of your diet
- Suspect—you can eat them now and then
- Toxic—very much discouraged

You eat:

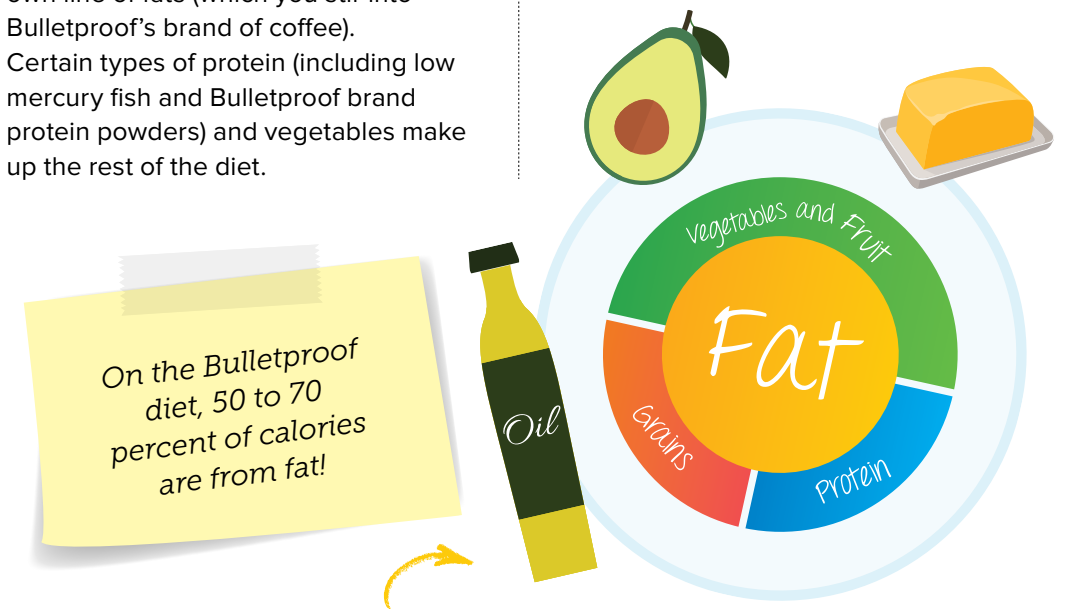
- 50 to 70 percent of calories from fat—but only certain types, such as avocado, oil, grass-fed butter, and Bulletproof's own line of fats (which you stir into Bulletproof's brand of coffee).
- Certain types of protein (including low mercury fish and Bulletproof brand protein powders) and vegetables make up the rest of the diet.

What You Don't Eat

"Toxic" foods include (this is just a sampling): regular pasteurized milk, soy milk, canned vegetables, safflower oil, legumes, peanuts, all cheese, oats, wheat, cantaloupe, raisins, high fructose corn syrup, sucralose (Splenda). And then there's a long list of "suspect" foods (such as kale)!

The Low-down

This diet is unsupported by science in so many ways, it's hard to know where to begin! Some of the "toxic" foods, such as legumes and oats, are actually some of the healthiest foods on earth. And researchers aren't sure how a long-term diet with such high levels of fat could affect your health and your appetite.

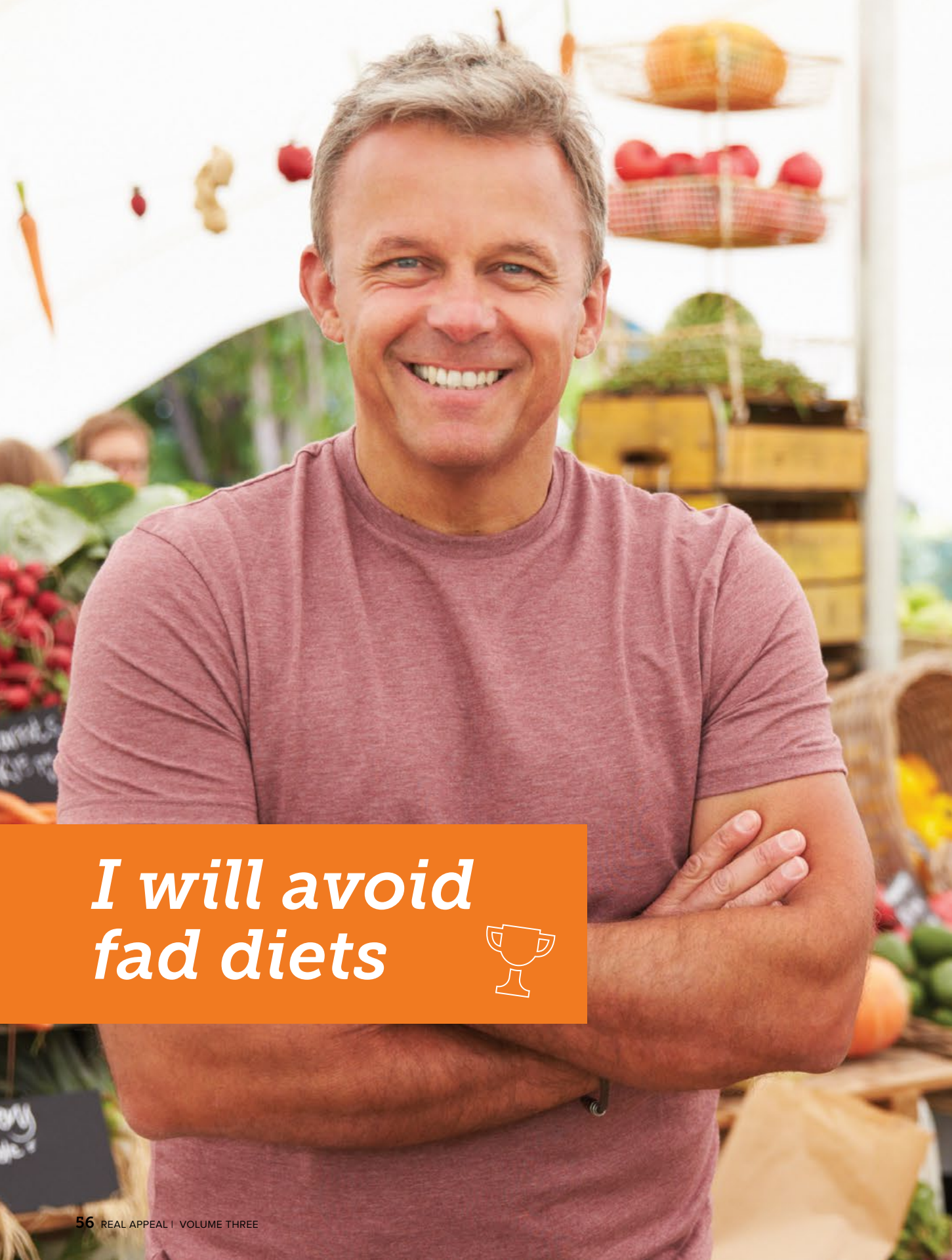


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- Purchase vitamin, mineral and/or weight-loss supplements
- Completely ban certain foods (such as starches or specific fruits)
- Eat in an unsustainably restrictive way

Trust your own instincts!





*I will avoid
fad diets*



Commitment Contract

I'll avoid fad diets and stick to a healthy way of eating that I can sustain long-term.

- ☐ I'll continue adapting Real Appeal's nutrition guidelines to fit my tastes and lifestyle.
- ☐ I'll use what I learned in this session to spot a fad diet—and avoid it!
- ☐ Meanwhile, I'll continue my other healthy habits to the best of my ability.

My signature: _____