

Trending Diets



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Introduction



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Introduction

Trending Diets

“What’s the best diet to follow?” As a nutrition coach, you’re bound to hear this a multitude of times throughout your career. You’ll encounter clients with a variety of diets in their past and those interested in trying the latest trends. From the keto diet to intermittent fasting, the carnivore diet, or counting macros, your client, or someone they know, probably found a certain level of success losing weight while following one of these diets. Unfortunately, they also found that the weight usually crept back on over time, plus a few extra pounds. So now they’re there here, asking you for advice on the best plan to follow.

Each diet has its own unique take on how a person should eat: high fat intake, eat only during certain hours, consume only meat, or just eat a certain ratio of nutrients. With such clear differences between diets, it should be easy to determine which one has the best plan, right? Not so much. Because just as each diet is unique, so is each client. From the type of food they can afford to the amount of exercise they fit into each day, there are many human factors that can affect the success of a diet plan.

So, what will work?

Let’s take a step back. Instead of focusing on the differences between these diets, consider the similarities. There must be something that worked if some people were able to lose weight while following these diets. Indeed, perhaps the differences aren’t all that important and the results lie in the similarities.

The biggest similarity is that these plans force the user to follow the first rule of good nutrition: Control your energy balance. The energy flowing out of the body must exceed the energy flowing into the body to achieve weight loss. And if someone achieves weight loss with any of the diet plans mentioned here, it must be due to the negative energy balance, not the lack of carbs or a specific macronutrient ratio. So how do all three create a negative energy balance? Here’s how:



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1. The process of following a weight loss plan tends to reduce calorie intake, helping clients decrease energy in and shift their bodies toward a more negative energy balance.
2. Exercise programs also help clients to contribute to the negative energy balance by helping them increase energy out.
3. The keto diet and counting macros plan require dieters to restrict their intake of certain nutrients to achieve a certain ratio overall. The carnivore diet restricts various food groups and intermittent fast restricts the time during which you can eat. In some way or another, eat diet lead to eating of less total food.

It is not a magical, mythical macronutrient mix; it is a balance of energy. It is building healthy habits that support goals for a healthy lifestyle.

Don't completely ignore those trendy diets, because your clients will ask you about them. Just make sure you do your research so you can help your clients make informed decisions. We've rounded up a few trending diets here to give you a head start, so read on and get ready to help your clients build healthy habits.



Keto Diet



Keto Diet

What is the Keto Diet?

When it comes to diets aimed at weight loss, the role of the personal trainer is not to choose one for the client but to make sure that he or she is prepared to make an informed choice. That means staying on top of the latest trends, and no weight loss plan is hotter today than the keto diet.

Like most diets, the keto diet is not for everyone, and there are costs and benefits for those who choose to go on it. With that in mind, here's what fitness professionals need to know.

In a recent article, doctors Paoli, Bianco and Grimaldi defined the ketogenic diet as, "A nutritional approach consisting of high fat and adequate protein content but insufficient levels of carbohydrates for metabolic needs, thus forcing the body primarily to use fat as a fuel source." It's a fairly straightforward definition, but why or how does it work?

With very low carbohydrate intake, the body shifts the primary energy source from blood sugar (glucose derived from carbs) to ketones, which are derived from fat by the process of ketogenesis. Ketones act as a fuel source when glucose is in short supply. They are produced when very few carbs and a moderate amount of protein make up a diet.

Foods allowed on the keto diet

With a low-carb, high-fat nutritional profile, the ketogenic diet is contrary to the "standard American diet," which is generally high in carbs and protein and low in fat (at least naturally occurring fat, if not trans fat). On this weight loss plan, dieters are encouraged to eat lots of grass-fed butter, olive oil, cheese (think cheddar, feta, and bleu), heavy cream, and MCT (medium-chain triglycerides) oil.

Additionally, nuts and seeds, such as walnuts, almonds, Brazil nuts, and flaxseed are high fat, moderate protein options. Followers of the diet can have nut butters as well, but they need to make sure they don't have added



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sugar. Bone broth is a keto favorite to reportedly help maintain gut health, and it is high in fat and contains amino acids. Fatty fish, eggs, and grass-fed beef are also recommended on this diet.

Since carbs have to remain below 100g per day, non-starchy vegetables (most veggies harvested above ground), leafy greens, broccoli, zucchini, celery, asparagus, tomatoes, blackberries, and raspberries are healthy, phytonutrient-rich options. Keto dieters can also consume 80 percent dark chocolate and red wine on occasion.

Foods avoided on the keto diet

Although many headlines suggest that followers of the keto diet can eat all the bacon and coconut oil their heart desires and still lose weight, those aren't the healthiest options available. In addition, trans fats (found in processed foods such as margarine) should be avoided, as well as dairy milk. Coconut milk is the recommended alternative. Although many proponents of keto love to have a spoonful with every meal, coconut oil, a saturated fat, should be eaten in moderation. A keto follower will also avoid deli meats, lean meat (think chicken without the skin), beans, and breaded and fried meat, such as chicken nuggets or fish sticks.

Keto dieters can say goodbye to the "apple a day" philosophy for creating a healthy body; fruits are considered far too sugary to fit into this low-carb diet. Also off the menu are potatoes, corn, pasta, sodas, juice, beer, bread, rice, and candy.

High-fat meals can be flavored with fresh herbs, salt, and pepper. But keto dieters skip the marinades, sauces, and dressings. Of course, if they must have dressing on veggies, proponents should make sure they are homemade. The ones found on store shelves have added sugar and can bump dieters out of their hard-earned state of nutritional ketosis. And speaking of sweeteners, sugar (obviously), agave, honey, and maple syrup are all banned.



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Negative Side Effects of the Keto Diet

As you might have guessed, putting a body into a fake state of starvation to reduce body fat or to help control blood sugar is a process not without some negative side effects. The “keto flu” is the most common side effect. Many people report a laundry list of symptoms, but the keto flu is different for everyone. Here’s what you could expect:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Difficulty focusing
- Lack of motivation
- Irritability

These symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Other side effects include leg cramps, constipation, heart palpitations, and reduced physical performance.

A byproduct of ketone production is acetone. The body gets rid of this toxin via expiration. So, some keto dieters’ breath takes on the smell of nail polish remover, otherwise termed “keto breath.” Most of the time this side effect is temporary, but there are occasions where it lasts as long as the body is in ketosis.

Why is the Keto Diet So Trendy for Weight Loss?

The popularity of low-carb diets for weight loss is only partially warranted, more so a bit bloated. One of the reasons the keto diet has become so wildly popular is the large amount of weight people lose when followers cut their net carbs down below 100 grams—a drastic drop for most Americans who generally eat 300 grams per day or more.



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However exciting it may be to see a 5-10 pound weight loss within the first week, this weight loss is not from fat, but water. Each gram of glycogen in the body is associated with 3-4 grams of water. As the body burns through the stored glycogen from your cells, it also burns through the water partnered with the glycogen. Adding fuel to the fire is the number of celebrities who swear by this trendy weight loss technique. Actress Halle Berry, news anchor Katie Couric, singer Vanessa Hudgens, and reality TV stars Kourtney Kardashian and Mama June all attribute good health and significant weight loss to the keto diet.

Is the Keto Diet Right for Your Clients?

There are a number of health questions that need to be answered before embarking on a low-carb weight loss program for anyone.

Prediabetes?

A recent study pitted a low-carbohydrate keto diet against a moderate carbohydrate calorie-restricted diet and kept track of participant's HbA1c levels (measures the body's average blood sugar over a long period), and weight. At 12 months, those on the KD were able to reduce the amount of medication they took, had greater reductions in HbA1c, and lost more weight than the others (Saslow, et al., 2017). Before getting started, your clients should get the approval of their physician, as their diet will have to be medically supervised due to the danger of ketoacidosis. However, the keto diet might be an option.

Obesity?

Clients who are obese or overweight could possibly benefit from a reduced carb diet. The initial weight loss (all water weight) will be a great boost to your client's motivation. Remember, too, that this type of diet helps to reduce appetite and increase metabolic function, both great for keeping clients on track and progressing towards their weight loss goal. If a client is already on medications for high cholesterol, you may want to consult his or her physician before getting started. A doctor may want to monitor blood lipids throughout the diet to ensure the client stays in a safe range.



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Athletes?

Athletes might not be the best candidates for a low-carb diet. Although a ketogenic diet may reduce body fat, as found by Kephart, et al. (2018), in their study on Crossfit athletes, they also noted no improvements in athletic performance. Further, participants on the keto diet lost muscle mass (in their legs). The study authors noted, “the diet could adversely affect muscle anabolism.” Athletes will have to decide if the benefits of weight loss are greater than any loss of strength that could come with it.

Muscle hypertrophy goals?

If your clients aim to bulk up and get buff, this high-fat, moderate-protein, low-carb diet won't help them achieve their goals. In the article “The Right Way to Burn Fat, Not Muscle,” author Jason Williams says, “Low glycogen levels (stored carbohydrates) combined with high-intensity exercise creates opportunities for the body to burn higher amounts of muscle.” He goes on to say, “The optimal situation is to create opportunities to consume protein to rebuild muscle and carbohydrates to burn as fuel.”

It is widely recommended to increase carb intake on heavy lifting days, so the keto diet would be counterproductive to building a muscular body.

As a final note, our jobs as fitness professionals is to know the science (when applicable) behind trending meal plans. Just as importantly, however, we must recognize the potential negative side effects. When clients begin to follow specific nutrition programs, there will most likely be impact (sometimes negative and sometimes positive) on the results of their overarching fitness goals. Our responsibility lies in staying informed and passing that education along to our clients.



Keto Diet

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Intermittent Fasting



Intermittent Fasting

Could Intermittent Fasting Benefit Your Clients?

Intermittent fasting is arguably the biggest diet trend right now, and if your clients ask you about it you need to be prepared:

- How do you do intermittent fasting?
- Is it right for me?
- Will I lose weight?
- Can I eat whatever I want?

Intermittent fasting is a style of eating rather than a restrictive diet, which is a major appeal for a lot of people looking to trim down. But this doesn't mean it works for everyone. Indeed, weight loss results from any diet are most often due to the severe reduction of calories. And, there are many ways to implement intermittent fasting, so read up and share some of this information with your interested clients.

What Exactly is Intermittent Fasting?

Intermittent fasting is often thought of as a diet, but it's actually a style or pattern of eating, not a diet. What differentiates it from a diet is that fasting does not have anything to do with what you eat, rather when you eat. This is not to say that clients should go ahead and start without consulting their physician. You should always encourage them to talk to their doctor before making any major changes in their eating habits.

It is a simple pattern of eating that shifts between designated periods of fasting—not eating at all or severely restricting calorie intake—and periods of eating healthfully. Exactly when and for how long the fasting periods last depends on individual choice.



Intermittent Fasting

Potential Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

A lot of research has been done to determine if intermittent fasting is safe, effective for weight loss, and beneficial for overall health. The overwhelming results indicate that this style of eating does help with weight loss and can provide a number of health benefits, while risks are low.

Weight loss

The number one reason people choose to fast intermittently is to lose weight. And the good news is that it's effective. If you don't go overboard during eating times, you should lose weight. The main reason for this is that an intermittent fast reduces your calorie intake overall. There are some other hormonal and metabolic factors at work that can up weight loss, but generally it is the reduced calories that make intermittent fasting work.

Lose body fat

As a trainer you know that losing weight is not always a simple matter of watching the number on the scale decrease. Losing weight may result from fat loss, muscle loss, or both. Of course, what we want is fat loss, but that doesn't always happen with simple calorie or food restriction.

A benefit of intermittent fasting is that it promotes fat loss, not just weight loss. Fasting triggers human growth hormone, which is beneficial for fat loss and muscle gain.¹ Fasting also increases insulin sensitivity, another hormone change that results in loss of fat.

A simplified diet

One of the best things about this pattern of eating is that it isn't actually a diet. Counting calories, restricting certain foods, sticking with a paleo or plant-based diet dictate *what* you can eat, but intermittent fasting only dictates *when* you can eat.



Intermittent Fasting

This is an approach to weight loss that is much simpler. You can technically eat whatever you want. The only stipulation is that you restrict when you eat. Of course, if you decide to use your eating times to binge and eat nothing but junk, weight loss probably won't happen.

Potential Risks of Fasting

A lot of the evidence from research into fasting diets proves that this is an overwhelmingly beneficial way to eat. However, that doesn't mean there are no risks. Before your clients try fasting, make sure you go over any potential pitfalls and help them select a style of intermittent fasting with the lowest risks.

Benefits may not be as great for women

Unfortunately, a lot of research is done mostly with male participants. There have been some studies of intermittent fasting, though, that compare effects for women and men. And the results show it's not all rainbows and sunshine for women.

In one study, men who fasted had better insulin sensitivity, but the women involved had decreased blood sugar control.³ There is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that women may experience missed menstrual cycles. For your female clients, have them ask their doctors about fasting and if given the go-ahead, help them ease into it.

Hunger, weakness, bad mood

Naturally, a major side effect of fasting is that you'll feel hungry. Some people cope better with this than others. Fasting can make you feel weak; it can put you in a really sour mood; and it can even decrease your cognitive performance, making it difficult to think, make decisions, or just do your work.

Binging on junk

Those who don't respond too well to a fasting period may be at a greater risk of overdoing it during time periods with no restrictions. If your client struggles to reign in the urge to eat a whole pizza, a two-liter of soda, and several meatball subs during the eight-hour window, this might not be the right diet for him.



Intermittent Fasting

So, should you encourage your client to try intermittent fasting? If he or she has weight loss goals and is struggling to meet them, it's a valid possibility. Most of all, though, you are there to provide good information to help a client make the right personal choice.

Intermittent fasting shows great promise, both for weight loss and for overall good health. Just remember that it's not for everyone, and that the most important thing for your clients to remember is to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet that avoids junk and empty calories, whether they choose to fast or not.

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Counting Macros



Counting Macros

Taking Food Tracking to the Next Level

When it comes to cardinal rules in the world of fitness professionals, this one sits near the top: No personal trainer should ever recommend or endorse a particular diet for weight loss.

There are simply too many variables involved, with every client's story unique. But that hasn't stopped the next diet "fad" from always being right around the corner, complete with an alleged scientific breakthrough that promises results that all too often fail to deliver for the countless number of people who invest their time and money.

Which is why so many turn back to the old reliable: Burn more calories in a day than you take in and you'll lose weight, an approach that usually coincides with a lifestyle change. From that basic concept was born, long ago, the idea of counting calories, followed relatively recently by its lesser known relative, counting macros.

Clients might start asking you if they should be counting their macros and how it works. Whether you agree with this type of food tracking and diet is up to you. However, what's important is that you know the details behind counting macros and that you refer them out if their questions encroach on your scope of work.

Counting Macros and Weight Loss

A diet that allows people to eat whatever they want and still lose weight? It's a concept that should be on every trainer's radar.

Those who rave about the diet are most often drawn to counting macros for weight loss because all foods—including jumbo chocolate chip cookies, loaded baked potatoes, and fried chicken—are allowed, as long as they "fit your macros." This is in stark contrast to most other diets which restrict the types of foods you're allowed to consume.



Counting Macros

If you have clients who find counting calories to be tedious, they won't be excited to hear that they now need to weigh and measure their foods. Counting calories is hard enough for most, without adding to the equation the breakdown of protein, carbohydrates (*"do I count carbs before or after fiber?"*) and fats in each item. But those who have given it the ol' college try say that the counting and weighing aren't so bad, especially if the results are there.

By counting—or tracking—macros, clients can more closely regulate what they are eating and drinking than by simply counting calories, as counting calories doesn't take into account the quality of the food, just the quantity.

Counting macros has been popular among bodybuilders for years, allowing them to customize their diets at specific points in their training program to support performance and manage body composition.

Making Sense of the Numbers

Generally speaking, an individual should consume more carbohydrates to achieve lean mass gains and fewer carbs to achieve fat loss. The types of carbs consumed matters too, with complex carbs, which provide a steady release of energy, preferred over simple carbs.

The macro profile for each client is dependent upon their goals. Here's a cheat sheet to get you started:

- To build muscle: 30-40% carbs, 25-35% protein, 15-25% fats
- For fat loss: 10-30% carbs, 40-50% protein, 30-40% fats
- To maintain: 30-50% carbs, 25-35% protein, 25-35% fats

As you can see, there is a lot of wiggle room (up to 20%) when you calculate macros for your client and you can adjust the ratio as needed if they aren't seeing results.

You should also take into account your client's body type.

- Ectomorphs (thin, small bones) can handle a higher percentage of carbs (around 55 percent), with moderate protein (25) and low fats (20).



Counting Macros

- Mesomorphs (athletic) call for a more balanced percentage (40 for carbs, 30 each for protein and fats).
- Endomorphs (larger bones, higher fat mass) are better suited for fewer carbs (25), a moderate amount of protein (25) and lower fats (20).

How to Plan Your Diet and Reach Your Goals

The best place to start is to determine how many calories your client needs on a daily basis to maintain a healthy lifestyle. IIFYM.com, myfitnesspal.com and loseit.com are popular websites that offer macros calculators, making it simple to determine the right percentages for each fitness goal. Encourage your clients to download a phone app for one of these sites to make tracking even easier.

As an example, we will focus on the fictional Jane, a 35-year-old woman, 5-foot-7, 155 pounds, who is moderately active. Her goal is to cut fat and lose weight.

Using an online calorie calculator, we determined that she would need to limit her diet to approximately 1400 net calories a day to lose one pound a week. As a general rule, the daily allotment of protein for weight loss should calculate to one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight. So, Jane should consume 155 grams of protein per day, which means that 620 of her 1400 kcals (44 percent) should come from proteins. That leaves 780 calories to be divided between carbs and fats.

With fat loss as the goal, we will limit her carb intake to approximately 20 percent of the remaining calories. Approximately 280 calories, or 70 grams, will be committed to carbs. That leaves 36 percent of her calories to come from fats, about 51 grams of fat and 200 calories.

Jane now knows that if her daily diet includes 155 grams of protein, 70 grams of carbs, and 51 grams of fat, and that if she maintains her current level of activity, she will be able to lose one pound per week.

To make sure she stays on track, Jane will have to use a food scale to measure various portions. While much of the food we eat has nutritional information on the package that easily can be read to determine the macros in a single serving, foods such as pasta and rice need to be weighed.



Counting Macros

If a client is new to dieting, it is important that they use a food log to get started. You can ease your client into a better-balanced macronutrient profile by adjusting their macros each week and tracking it in a food log.

Another key component to staying true to this particular diet is to plan meals in advance. Trying to put a meal together at the last minute raises the possibility of the numbers failing to add up correctly. Keeping a food log, at least in the early stages of counting macros, also will help in making smart choices.

Over time it becomes easier to recognize proper portion sizes, which, by the way, fall right in line with the age-old method of using your hand, your fist, and your thumb to measure proteins, carbs and fats.

Sometimes what's old is what's new.

