

→ Successful Weight Loss



the **10** **BEST** **Diet Programs**

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Finding the right diet for your body and personality is a recipe for success, says Tara Gidus, R.D., team dietitian for the Orlando Magic basketball team and the “Diet Diva” on The Daily Buzz TV show. “But it takes research and figuring out what’s right for you. Aim for something that is realistic and focuses on long-term change. You know your body and your habits better than anyone else, so you are the best person to decide how you eat.” We asked top fitness magazine editors and weight loss experts to name the 10 best diet plans. Here are their picks, listed in no particular order, with an explanation of how and why they work.

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BEST BALANCED DIET

◆ *Weight Watchers*

Not surprisingly, this world-wide organization founded in 1963 by Jean Nidetch is ranked high on dieters' lists because of its flexibility, group support and general popularity. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have celebrity endorsements like superstars Jennifer Hudson and Jessica Simpson in its corner touting the benefits. Weight Watchers makes it easy to track your progress by counting points instead of calories. They launched their PointsPlus program in November 2010. It assigns every food a point value based on protein, carbohydrate, fat and fiber. Healthy

choices that fill you up the longest "cost" the least. They also have a vast line of frozen foods and handy ready-to-eat foods in grocery stores. The company recently unveiled Weight Watchers 360°, a plan that offers a range of healthy lifestyle techniques and technology to help people lose weight and keep it off. "Weight Watchers is tried and true," says Gidus. "It's been around for a long time, and they have kept up with the times. The point system is easy, the plan encourages every food a point value, and you can get as much support as you need."

"People are under the impression that I'm still losing, but I'm not," says Jennifer.



Jessica Simpson lost 50 pounds on Weight Watchers after becoming a mom in 2012. Now, she's pregnant again.



Jennifer Hudson dropped 80 pounds and went from a size 16 to a size 6.



BEST ANTI-AGING DIET ◆ *The Mediterranean Diet*

You don't need to take a cruise to the Mediterranean to benefit from its heart-healthy, anti-aging diet. Some of the world's oldest and healthiest people eat a diet based on fish, fresh vegetables, ripe fruits and, of course, olive oil and an occasional glass of wine! The Mayo Clinic says research has shown that this delicious diet may reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and cancer mortality, and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. Besides relying on plant-based foods, limiting red meat and encouraging consumption of fish, the diet also recommends getting plenty of exercise in the fresh air and stresses the importance of enjoying meals with family and friends. Residents of Greece eat very little meat and average nine servings a day of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, which slow down the aging process. "People in that region don't skip meals and eat at regular times, which limit them from long periods of feeling hungry," says Dr. Michael Feiz, a Beverly Hills weight loss expert. "Hunger forces people to eat too much food, too fast and at the wrong times."



BEST BALANCED DIET ◆ *Weight Watchers*

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BEST LOW CARB DIET ♦ *The South Beach Diet*

This popular diet book was written by Miami-based preventive cardiologist Arthur Agatston, M.D., for his own patients and became a runaway success, spending nearly four years on the New York Times best-seller list. It was first published in 2003 and has endured several incarnations, always emphasizing avoiding carbs like pasta and potatoes and eating the right carbs, like colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans. You don't limit fats, but you do choose the right

fats like olive oil, canola oil, nuts and fish. Many of the diet ideas are explained on southbeachdiet.com, launched as the companion Web site to the original book. Users can create their own meal plans using a database of more than 1,000 recipes, which includes a personalized shopping list. "The first phase is low on carbs, but since it doesn't last forever, it's fine to use as a kick-start," says Gidus. "By the time you get to phase three, this is the way everyone should be eating."



BEST VEGETARIAN DIET ♦ *The Ornish Diet*

Dean Ornish, a clinical professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and author of the 2008 book, *The Spectrum*, has long touted a whole foods, plant-based diet to reverse heart disease as well as lose weight. The Ornish Diet popularized in the late 1990s continues to gain favor, especially in light of the recent documentary *Forks Over Knives* which points out the benefits of vegetarianism. Ornish recommends a low-fat diet but includes a spectrum of weight loss tools that include aerobic exercise, stress management and emotional support options (go to ornish.com for more). He does

allow some animal products such as egg whites and dairy products like non-fat cheese, yogurt, sour cream and milk. Although his diet plan may be restrictive, he encourages people to eat all they want of these foods whenever they are hungry to keep their metabolism humming. He also recommends daily meditation – "food for the soul – to deal with stress and stress eating. While the Ornish plan is strict, it is excellent," says Gidus. "I love that his plan doesn't just focus on the plant-based diet, but includes important things like stress reduction and management and has a big emphasis on exercise."



BEST CONVENIENCE DIETS ♦ *Nutrisystem*



The Nutrisystem diet plan uses frequent, portion-controlled, balanced nutrition and low glycemic index (GI) foods to help control erratic blood sugar swings. It was created 40 years ago in Philadelphia by Harold Katz, who opened the first diet and weight loss center in that city. The program – later known as Nutrisystem – focused on diet and behavioral counseling, a philosophy that lives on in his company today. The plan consists of weight loss, maintenance and transition stages to ensure long-term success. The beauty of Nutrisystem is that it offers more than 140 menu

options, including home delivery of fresh-frozen meals, pantry-ready meals and protein shakes for as little as \$8 a day. There are no public weigh-ins, meetings or counting points although clients do have access to online or phone support from dietitians. Singer/actress Marie Osmond is a client and spokesperson for the program which offers plans specially tailored for women, men, teens, vegetarians and diabetics. "Pre-packaged meals offer convenience and help educate the consumer on correct portion size," says Dr. Craig Title, a weight loss expert from New York.


RUNNER-UP

♦ *Jenny Craig* The weight-loss company is known for the convenience of its prepackaged foods, as well as its high-profile success stories, including singer Mariah Carey and actress Valerie Bertinelli. A bonus: The Jenny Craig company provides lifestyle counseling services.

Marie Osmond, 53, lost 50 pounds on Nutrisystem.



"My joints ached. My confidence was down," says Marie of her days before she got slim.



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BEST FITNESS LOVERS DIET ♦ *Body for Life*

Bill Phillips' runaway best-selling book is geared for quick results and hard bodies. The concept is that you eat six small meals a day while weight training for 45 minutes, three times a week and training aerobically for at least 20 minutes, three times a week. In 12 weeks he promises you the best body you've ever had. Meals consist of a combination of healthy carbohydrates and lean protein to speed weight loss and maintain stable energy levels, says Phillips. The good news is on the seventh day

you can rest and eat whatever you want. A healthy diet and strenuous exercise is the key to the diet program and the Body for Life Web site provides a wealth of information including an active community, meal plans, shopping lists, training tools and success stories to keep you motivated. "I totally agree with this diet plan and give it top marks," notes Dr. Feiz. "You build fat-burning muscle and trim and tone your body, as well as keep your cardiovascular system healthy."



BEST LOW-CALORIE DIET ♦ *The DASH Diet*

The National Institutes of Health endorses a heart-healthy plan that also reduces the risk of diabetes. It's called the DASH diet and stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. According to the Mayo Clinic, this is a lifelong

approach to healthy eating that's designed to treat or prevent high blood pressure (hypertension). The DASH diet recommends reducing your sodium intake and eating a variety of foods rich in nutrients that help lower blood pressure -

potassium, calcium and magnesium. While technically not a weight loss program, you lose unwanted pounds because it helps guide you toward healthier meals and snacks. The key goal is to reduce sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams

a day. "When it comes to disease prevention, the DASH diet is a winner," notes Gidus. "The base consists of high-fiber, low-calorie foods while watching sodium and maximizing other important nutrients like calcium and potassium."



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BEST VEGAN DIET ♦ *The McDougall Plan*

Former president Bill Clinton adopted a vegan diet after having bypass heart surgery and two stents inserted into his coronary arteries. Actress Alicia Silverstone is a vegan because she's an animal activist. But whether you adopt a meat-and-dairy-free, starch-based diet for health or political reasons, the McDougall Plan has you covered.

"We have the scientific evidence and research to prove that for hundreds of thousands of years, a starch-based diet is the only human diet that fits our genetic disposition," Dr. John McDougall, author and creator of the best-selling program, says. "You can regain

your health, achieve optimum weight, enhance both your appearance and vitality and restore normal body function."

The McDougall plan features plant-based foods, including whole grains and whole-grain products such as pasta and tortillas, a wide assortment of fruits and vegetables, fruit and simple exercise like a daily walk. The diet shuns animal foods, dairy products, eggs, fish and all oils, including olive oil. "Vegan diets are great for people who want to live longer, healthier and stronger but requires willpower and discipline," says Dr. Aaron Tabor, a weight loss specialist from Kernersville, N.C.



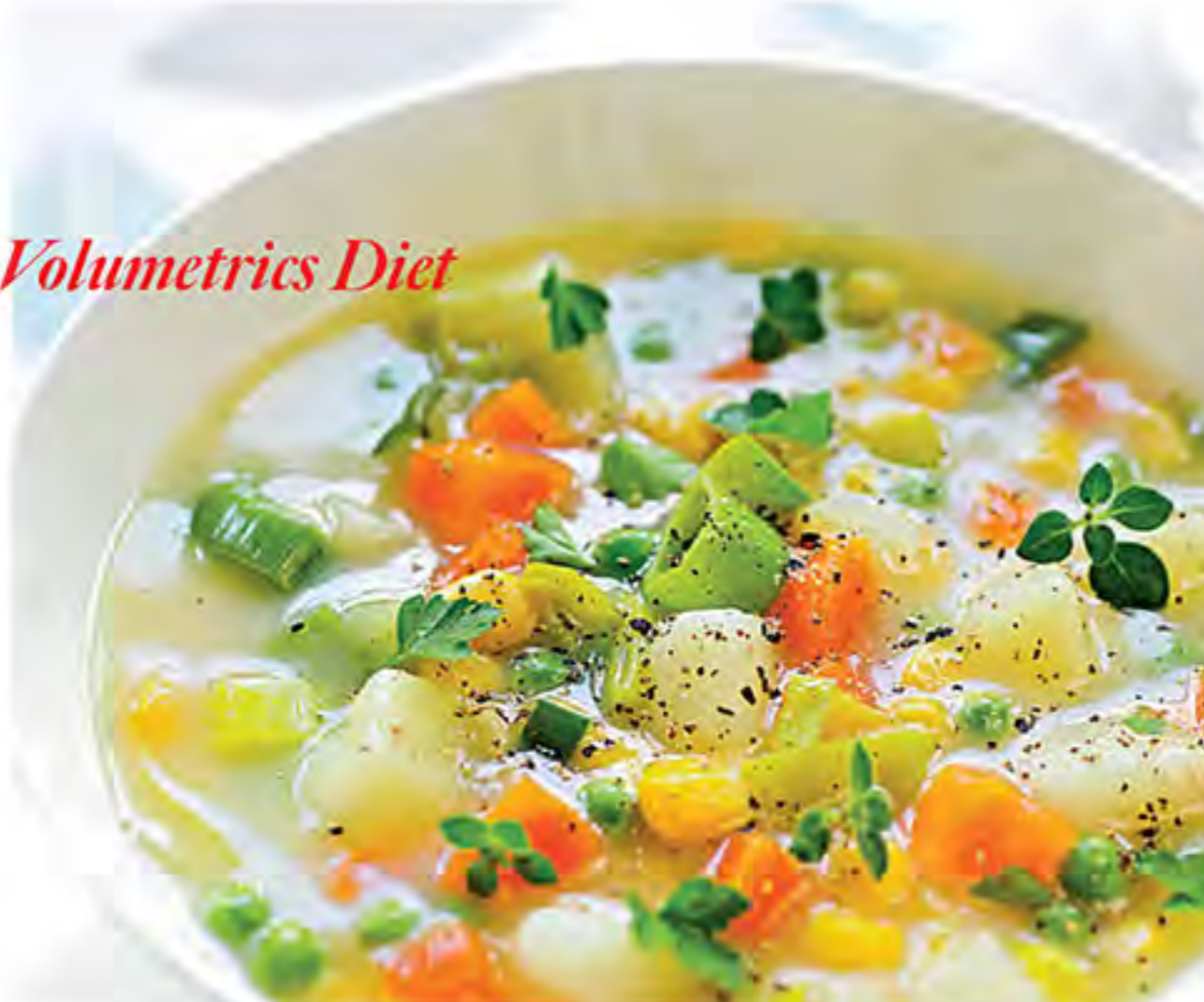
BEST HIGH VOLUME DIET ♦ *The Volumetrics Diet*

The emphasis is on "high volume, low calorie" foods that allow you to eat more volume without packing on extra pounds. Because you eat as much as you want of the approved no-limit foods, the plan promises that you will lose weight without starving.

Volumetrics is all about getting more mileage from what you eat by choosing from four categories of foods ranging from low to high calorie density. Followers are encouraged to select lower calorie-dense foods such as non-starchy fruits and veggies, broth-based

soups instead of high density foods like nuts, butter, candies and crackers. You can fill your plate with leafy greens and vegetables and not have to worry about calorie or portion control.

The diet highlights chicken, fruit, vegetables and non-fat and low-fat dairy products and was pioneered by Penn State University nutrition professor Barbara Rolls. Her latest book is *The Ultimate Volumetrics Diet*, written with Mindy Hermann. "For people who like a full plate of food, Volumetrics is the plan for you!" says Gidus.



BEST HIGH-PROTEIN DIET ♦ *The Atkins and Eco Atkins Diet*

It's estimated that 20 million people worldwide have tried the Atkins Diet, created by Dr. Robert C. Atkins back in the 1970s. His book, *New Diet Revolution*, remained on the New York Times best-seller list for four years, followed by the 2010 edition of *New Atkins for a New You*.

On Atkins, you can feast on

steak with béarnaise sauce, eggs and bacon, and cheddar cheese omelets. The program promises that you can lose up to 15 pounds in the first two weeks by eating protein and fat with severely restricted carbs in the form of leafy greens or cooked, non-starchy veggies. The theory is that your body goes into a state

of ketosis, burning fat stores for energy. Atkins also claims that the diet helps control appetite, improves heart health and memory function. The first two weeks are the most restrictive and then you gradually introduce approved carbs back into the diet. However, there is no refined sugar, milk, white rice or flour

allowed. For non-meat eaters, there's a new vegetarian version called *Eco Atkins* featuring plant-based proteins. "While still too low in carbs for my liking, the *Eco Atkins* makeover offers you healthier protein choices than the pork rinds and heavy cream from the original Atkins," says Gidus.

