

Top Ten Popular Diets - Healthy or Not?



A new scientific statement by The American Heart Association rates ten popular diets on how well they align with the Association's guidance for heart-healthy eating. The ten diets that were evaluated include Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, the Mediterranean diet, the vegetarian-style/pescatarian diet, the vegetarian-style/ovo/lacto diet, the vegetarian-style/vegan diet, the low-fat diet, the very low-fat diet, the low-carb diet, the paleolithic diet and the very low-carb/keto diet.

The statement identifies four tiers of dietary patterns based on how well they align with the American Heart Association's guidance. Tier 1 includes DASH-style, Mediterranean-style, vegetarian, and pescatarian eating patterns, which are rich in non-starchy vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, and lean protein. Tier 2 includes vegan and low-fat diets that emphasise healthy foods but may be challenging to follow long-term. Tier 3 includes very low-fat and low-carb diets, which have moderate alignment with the guidance and may result in nutrient deficiencies or overconsumption of less healthy foods. Tier 4 includes Paleolithic and very low-carb/ketogenic diets, which align poorly with the guidance, are highly restrictive and may result in cardiovascular disease risk.

As per the Association's evaluation, the DASH, Mediterranean, pescatarian, and vegetarian eating patterns received top ratings. However, the Paleo and ketogenic diets were not considered heart-healthy eating patterns as they contradict the Association's guidance.

The statement aims to serve as a tool for clinicians and the general public to understand which diets promote good cardiometabolic health. As per their guidelines, limiting unhealthy fats and reducing excess carbohydrate consumption is beneficial as excess consumption could increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

It is important to note that the Association's scientific statement did not review commercial dietary programs such as Weight Watchers, Noom etc., and diets that are to be followed for less than 12 weeks, and dietary practices like intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating, or diets designed to manage non-cardiovascular conditions like gastrointestinal conditions and food allergies or intolerances. The evaluation was focused on popular dietary patterns and how well they align with the Association's guidance for a heart-healthy eating pattern.

The statement also suggests opportunities to enhance the healthy aspects of each eating pattern.

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

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