



Diet Help: U.S News Has Its List of Best Diets

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What's the Best Diet?

The One that Suits You Best

Today there are hundreds of diets out there to choose from, each promising shape-slimming results. How do you pick the one that's right for you? To help consumers sift through the good and the not-so-good, *U.S. News* has just released its 2013 "Best Diets" report ranking 29 leading diets.

Evaluating these top picks is certainly a lot less daunting than trying to narrow down the massive diet pool, but it's still pretty overwhelming. So we asked UVA Health System dietetic intern Katherine Basbaum, MS, to weigh in and help us navigate through the report.



UVA Club Red: How did *U.S. News* select and rank these "best" diets?

Katherine: I was quite impressed with the rigorous scrutiny these 29 diets had to undergo in order to make the "Best Diets" cut for 2013. The selection and ranking process involved mining through medical journals and government reports, as well as consulting with a panel of 22 nationally recognized experts in diet, nutrition, obesity, food psychology, diabetes and heart disease. These nutrition-savvy heavy-hitters reviewed the 29 diets, and rated each one by:

- How easy it is to follow
- Its ability to produce short- and long-term weight loss
- Its nutritional completeness
- Its safety, and
- Its potential for preventing and managing diabetes and heart disease

The experts' ratings were converted to scores and stars – from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest) – to construct eight categories of "Best Diets" (see below).

UVA Club Red: How do you choose the right diet for you?

Katherine: The most important questions to ask yourself when picking a diet are:

1. "What do I want to get out of this diet?" (e.g. weight loss, heart health, diabetes management); and
2. "Can I truly see myself sticking to this way of eating for life?" (Consider your lifestyle, your food preferences and your finances.)

In other words, you want to pick a plan that fits like a glove for *what you want* and *who you are*. Within the U.S. News "Best Diets" report, there are eight categories. Select the ones that best describe your dieting goals and preferences, then research the top three in those 8 categories:

Best Diets Overall

DASH Diet (A Club Red article explains how this diet can help lower blood pressure.)

TLC Diet

Mayo Clinic Diet

Best Commercial Diets

Weight Watchers
Jenny Craig
Biggest Loser Diet

Best Weight-Loss Diets

Weight Watchers
Biggest Loser Diet
Jenny Craig

Best Diabetes Diets

Biggest Loser Diet
DASH Diet
Engine 2 Diet

Best Heart-Healthy Diets

Ornish Diet
TLC Diet
DASH Diet

Best Diets for Healthy Eating

DASH Diet
TLC Diet
Mediterranean Diet (UVA Health System Blog article explains the Mediterranean Diet)

Easiest Diets to Follow

Weight Watchers
Jenny Craig
Flexitarian Diet

Best Plant-Based Diets

Mediterranean Diet (Try this Club Red Mediterranean Pasta Salad recipe)
Flexitarian Diet
Ornish Diet

UVA Club Red: How do you feel as a nutritionist about the term “diet?”

Katherine: The word “diet” is one of those words that, in many minds, conjures up a whole host of other words like: restriction, temporality, deprivation, hunger, bland and boring. This is unfortunate, but not surprising. Over the years, savvy marketing

strategies have managed to redefine the word “diet” so that it is primarily associated with weight-loss, specifically the kind that is very fast and promises huge results like: “Lose 20 pounds in two weeks!”

So how do I feel about the term “diet” as it is perceived today? I don’t like it one bit. However, I *am* a fan of the word’s original definition: “Diet” is based on the Latin word ‘diaeta’ meaning “a manner of living; a way of life.” (Club Red member Victoria is a great example of this meaning. [Watch her video and get inspired.](#))

UVA Club Red: Can diet plans be effective without exercise?

Katherine: Yes, but if you do not pair some physical activity with the changes you make to your dietary habits, not only will it be harder and take longer to see results, but maintaining your results will be much more difficult.

This is especially true if you’re looking for a diet that helps you maintain heart health or control type 2 diabetes. Exercise — in addition to burning calories and giving you an extra edge and insurance toward weight loss and life-long maintenance — will help you take major strides toward lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, controlling blood sugar, strengthening bones and improving sleep (just to name a few!).

But I will offer one small piece of advice: if you decide to embark on a new lifestyle of healthful eating and exercise, you may not want to start both at once. It can be tempting to jump in full-force with a new plan, but you’ll stick to both longer if you start with just one.

For example, get going with the diet, really focus on mastering the techniques and making it work for your life, and *then* (perhaps after a month or two) add in exercise.

Check UVA Club Red next month for a breakdown of the most heart-healthy diets based on the U.S. News report.

For more information, check out these articles on diet and heart health:

Find out how adding fish to your diet can improve heart health

Get the skinny on detox diets and learn the risks

Find out how much salt you really need and how to cut excess from your diet

If you enjoyed this article, please share it! Also, has UVA Club Red helped you make positive, healthy lifestyle changes? If so, tell us how. “Like” our Facebook page and post a comment – we’d love to hear your story.

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