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Detox, Gluten-Free, Vegan: Best & Worst Diets, Q&A Part 4 Fad Diets

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Which are worth trying, which will prove a wash?

In this fourth installment of our **Fad Diet Q&A series**, UVA nutritionists Carole Havrila and Katherine Basbaum make their picks for best and worst diets on the popular market.

Q. What about the diets that got top ratings in a recent US News & World Report article: DASH, TLC diet, Mayo Clinic, Weight Watchers, Flexitarian, Volumetrics, Biggest Loser, Ornish, Engine 2, Flat Belly diet, Abs diet?

Havrila: I believe that these diets mentioned do work and can work if followed, and the calories are not severely limited (below 1200 calories for women and 1500 for men). The DASH diet, Mayo Clinic, Weight Watchers, Flexitarian, Volumetrics and vegan/vegetarian diets are all reasonable diets that work successfully when followed. Vegan diets require planning to make sure that important nutrients are included but are healthy diets in general.

Basbaum: For the fourth year in a row — when taking into consideration ease of use, nutrition, safety, effectiveness for weight loss and protection against diabetes and heart disease — *US News & World Report* has named the DASH diet as the best overall diet for 2014. Why? Because it's smart, balanced, realistic, tried and true.

Q. What fad diet makes you cringe the most?

Havrila: **Detox diets** that advocate large amounts of dietary supplements in addition to restrictive diets and enemas or other detoxification methods. These could potentially be dangerous to those on prescription medications and/or having cancer treatment.

Basbaum: Definitely the **gluten-free** craze that has been happening for the past couple of years. If you have a genuine, medically diagnosed intolerance to gluten, or if you have celiac disease, then a gluten-free diet is warranted. But as a weight-loss tool, it's potentially dangerous and may even cause weight *gain* if you don't do it right.

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Gluten-free foods are gaining popularity. But are they really healthy for everyone?

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