

## Eat Your Greens Episode 6

### Beyond Quick Results: Popular Fad Diets Debunked

Hey Mae, it's good to see you. Did you have a good Christmas?

Hi. Yeah, Christmas was wonderful. I always enjoy it.

I'm glad to hear it.

What are your plans for the new year?

Oh, you know, to finish a bunch of projects that I haven't finished,

Of course. Are you going to set any resolutions this year?

You know, yeah. This year I am determined to lose weight. And I think if I go on the right kind of diet, if I go on the one that's most interesting so I'll stick to it, I'll go on that kind of diet.

Oh, which one are you looking at?

Well, I'm thinking about the grapefruit diet.

Oh, the grapefruit diet. Wow, that's an interesting one. What made you think of that one?

Well, it sounds healthy just because it's involving grapefruit. So, I would think it has to work. And I like grapefruit. Especially if you sprinkle some sugar on top.

Well, that, that might not be part of the diet though. I suspect they're not going to let you do that. Well, that's not the weirdest diet I've heard of.

You've probably heard of the cabbage diet, right?

Oh, absolutely.

Well, do you know that actually is based on one from 175 B. C.? Cato the Elder. He advocated for, get this, the cabbage soup and urine diet. Would you like to eat cabbage soup and drink pee? How's that for a diet? Yum. Or in the 40s or 50s, the tapeworm diet.

People would swallow tapeworm eggs in order to lose weight. Why don't you try that one?

Right! I won't. Not.

Maybe stick with the grapefruit.

I'll stick with the grapefruit. I'll eat the rinds if I have to. Right?

Anything, anything else besides pee and tapeworms!

Welcome to Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black, where we discuss plant-based nutrition for the whole family. This podcast is all about supporting families in their efforts to give their children a solid foundation of healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. I'm your host, Dr. Amy Brown. Dr. Angela Black.

I'm a board-certified pediatrician with over 20 years of experience. Over the course of my career, I've witnessed the rise of issues like high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and even fatty liver disease in kids as young as 10. I'm passionate about using evidence-based guidelines to teach my patients and their parents how to prevent chronic diseases for a lifetime of health.

I hope you find this podcast to be informative. And empowering for more episodes or if you would like more information about child nutrition and feeding, please visit [www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com](http://www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com).

Happy New Year, and welcome to Episode 6 of Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black. It's January 1st, and we're all wearing our most comfortable, stretchiest sweatpants after spending the last two months in a free for all feeding frenzy, right? Hopefully not, but it is the start of a new year. That time when we naturally want to reflect on our goals and aspirations and set intentions for the coming year.

Of course, the most common resolution people make is to get healthier. Spring break is just a few months away, and we need to start working on that beach body, right? The weight loss and fitness industry knows this, and they're ramping up their marketing to take advantage of our fleeting resolve to go to the gym or start a new diet.

If you're one of those people trying to figure out which diet you want to start, this is the episode for you. Today, I'm going to take a look at some of the most popular fad diets. So, which will it be? Should you do keto? Paleo? Maybe the carnivore diet? If you've listened to the first five episodes of this podcast, you probably already know, it's not the carnivore diet.

As a reminder, this podcast provides general health information about nutrition and feeding of infants and children and is meant for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the important relationship between a parent, child, and pediatrician. If you have concerns about your child's nutrition, health, or growth, please consult your doctor.

As usual, I like to start with a definition. So, what is a fad diet? You probably already know this, but let's just go over it. A fad diet is usually defined as a restrictive eating pattern that promises rapid weight loss in a short period of time. Common characteristics of fad diets include exaggerated claims with no evidence to back them up, unreasonable restrictions, some of them eliminate one or more major food groups, and they all come with the promise of a quick fix.

Of course, they're nothing new. You can find reports of popular eating trends, captivating people with promises of miraculous health recovery or quick and easy weight loss going back hundreds of years, maybe even thousands. In fact, there are reports of Cato the Elder from 175 B. C. who recommended a cabbage and urine diet.

That's right! Eat tons of cabbage and drink the pee of other people who also eat tons of cabbage and, I don't know, something miraculous happens. So, this is a good time to point out that just because something is considered ancient wisdom doesn't necessarily mean that it's healthy or effective. Take bloodletting, for example. Terrible medical practice. Killed lots of patients. So just keep that in mind.

The first known diet book came out only about a hundred years after the invention of the printing press. In 1558. *The Art of Living Long* by an Italian was published, and he recommended eating 12 ounces of food per day - that's about three quarters of a pound, and drinking 14 ounces of wine per day. This was his secret to long life.

In 1825, another book came out called *The Physiology of Taste, or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. This book stated that overweight people should give up bread, flour-based foods, root vegetables like potatoes, sugar, and starches, and eat only fruits, vegetables, and lean meats. Does that sound familiar? Yeah, this was the prelude to things like Atkins or South Beach, Paleo, Caveman - all these modern low carb diets.

In the early 1900s, we have - this is a great one - the tapeworm diet. Yeah, people purposefully ingested tapeworm eggs to help them lose weight. Seems safe.

In the 20s, we start seeing ads targeting women promoting cigarette smoking as a healthy and effective weight loss strategy, even with doctors recommending them. Cigarette manufacturers actually added amphetamines and other appetite suppressants into their products.

By the 1930s, we have these super slim Hollywood stars - this flapper look that's very popular - and with it came the rise of a number of new fad diets, including one Dr. William Hay: he labeled foods as being either alkaline or basic, acidic, or neutral. And then he claimed that you should not eat, say, the alkaline and the acidic foods together because you couldn't digest them. None of that was based on science or even the actual pH of the food, but it gained a lot of popularity.

The 1930s was also the first time that you see the grapefruit diet, and this is still followed by some people today. In the 1930s version, you would eat a half a grapefruit, a little bit of toast, and an egg for breakfast, six slices of cucumber for lunch (that's it). And then for dinner, you got to finish the other half of your grapefruit, and you got to eat two whole eggs with some lettuce and tomato. So yeah, of course you're going to lose weight on this diet.

Anybody eating only six slices of cucumber for lunch is probably going to lose some weight. I mean, this is starvation level of calories here. The other one that was famous in the 1930s, apparently there was one, the banana and skim milk diet. Fun. In the 40s, we start seeing the continued rise of popularity of fad diets.

The lemonade or master cleanse diet. I think this is another one that's still used by some people today. This is a liquid fast where you only drank water with a little bit of lemon juice, syrup, and a dash of cayenne pepper. You drank this six to twelve times per day and that's how you lost weight. Yeah, duh. Anybody's gonna lose weight doing that.

Also in the 40s, they had things like fat reduction massages. Boy, wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't it be good? You could just go get a massage and they could just rub the fat away. I really wish that one was true.

The 50s saw the cabbage soup diet. Hey, shout out to Cato the Elder. At least they didn't recommend drinking pee with it.

In the mid 60s, we also see a gem, the drinking man's diet. In the drinking man's diet, you cut back on your carbs, so you got to eat a lot of, like, meat and lobster, things like that. And as a bonus, you got to drink several martinis per day. Another great, thing from the 60s was the Sleeping Beauty Diet, where you take sleeping pills and basically sleep for several days at a stretch, so you don't eat. Yeah, that one's safe.

The 1970s I think we can all agree was pretty weird no matter what subject you're talking about, and that was just as true for the diet industry. You get the cookie diet, the sexy pineapple diet, the eggs and wine diet, and for the first time ever we see Dr. Atkins low carb diet, which we all know continues robustly to this day. There was also the rise of diet pills, mostly these were things like amphetamines, but one that was introduced was called Fen-Phen. Some of you will recognize this name. It was a combination of fenfluramine and phentermine, and it was approved by the FDA for weight loss.

But here's the thing a significant number of patients developed heart disease in the form of their valves became thickened and abnormal and they also developed primary pulmonary hypertension, and cardiac fibrosis. So eventually Fen-Phen was pulled from the market and both phentermine and fenfluramine were not available.

So let me tell you a personal story. Fenfluramine, one of the ingredients in Fen-Phen was pulled from the market for a while, but the Europeans started studying it as a treatment for a type of epilepsy -happens to be the type of epilepsy that my daughter has. It's called Dravet syndrome.

It's a rare genetic form of epilepsy that's very difficult to treat. It starts in infancy. Kids have tons of seizures, don't respond to medications. And this was our experience with Sarah. We tried lots of different drugs, failed them all. She was in A couple of research studies, and nothing was working. So, the Europeans had good success with fenfluramine for Dravet syndrome.

And in the U. S. they convinced the FDA to allow it to be studied. So, Sarah entered the study, and it was a miracle for us. She was having approximately 50 to 80 seizures a month when we entered the study. And after starting fenfluramine, we actually had a whole year seizure free with this. It was really amazing.

In fact, when we were talking to the doctor about enrolling, he mentioned that some of the kids were actually seizure free and I flat out laughed, because we had tried so many things and really nothing had helped. So, I said, you know, well that's great, I'm happy for those families, but, if we get a weak seizure free, I'm gonna consider this a success.

She does have to have an echocardiogram every six months just to make sure that she's not developing any kind of valve disease. But fortunately, at these lower doses, it really hasn't been seen. So given the success that we've had with it for her seizure control, we're happy to go get an echo every six months.

And to us, it seems like, you know, worth the risk given the amount of seizure control we have. So that's my personal story about fenfluramine, but as a diet drug combined with phentermine, terrible.

So that brings us up to modern times. Here we are, 2024. And we're all a lot savvier about health and nutrition, right? I mean, we have the internet now, we can go learn all about health and nutrition science, and we're no longer susceptible to all that misinformation, huh?

Well, don't we all wish that were true? If anything, we're more susceptible because anyone can put anything they want out there on the internet with no evidence whatsoever to back it and claim that it's true and they can make it sound very science y and it's very confusing and difficult to sort out, right?

We've all been there, not knowing which website to trust and which one not to.

Fortunately, there are scientists, there are nutritionists, who are putting good quality information out onto the internet. You can access these studies. As always, I've included links to several of the research studies that I am basing this podcast episode on in my show notes. Go to [www.eatgreenwithdrblack.com](http://www.eatgreenwithdrblack.com) if you want to look at them. I'm not going to try to talk about every single current diet trend out there. I'll just hit a few of the big ones. So, let's start with my current favorite, right? The carnivore diet. I mentioned it earlier. The carnivore diet is basically an ultra-low carb diet in which only animal products like meat, eggs, and dairy are consumed. It is based on very unscientific health claims, and this diet can lead to vitamin deficiencies. It's completely devoid of fiber and will therefore destroy your gut microbiome and it significantly increases the risk of chronic diseases.

If you're considering whether or not to start the carnivore diet, I would really beg you to reconsider because ultimately, people who follow this diet long-term going to damage their health. Definitely going to be linked to high rates of heart disease.

Your colorectal cancer risk is going to skyrocket risk of stroke, diabetes, all of this is going to be associated with the carnivore diet. So that's all I'm going to say about that one. But please cross that one off your list if you were considering it. Probably if you're listening to this podcast, you're not the kind of person to consider it, but I just thought it had to be said.

Moving on to other less restrictive, less extreme, low carb diets... Let's talk about keto. Super popular. Very common: lots out there on the internet, lots of proponents. Of course, it's going to differ from individual to individual, but most of the time, carbohydrates are limited to less than 20 percent of the diet in a keto diet. The idea is to put yourself into the fat burning state where you make a chemical called ketones and you're using those for energy instead of glucose. Hence the name ketosis.

The keto diet has increased intake of fat and protein, usually mostly animal based, and then maybe some non-starchy, high fiber vegetables. It does limit fruit, the starchy vegetables, grains, and sugar. And in studies, people on low

carb diets did lose weight faster, initially, but in the studies, the effect usually wore off.

There are a number of reasons for this that I'm not going to go into, but it's all out there if you want to look for it. One of the reasons that people are interested in a low-carb diet or that it is recommended is as a prevention or treatment for diabetes with the idea being that if you reduce your carbohydrate intake, your blood sugar is going to stay in a healthy, normal range. And the evidence of the effect of the keto diet on diabetes risk and management is mixed.

Some studies show a beneficial effect and others do not. Often, this is due to the source of the fat and protein. Low-carb diets based on animal sources of fat and protein have been shown to have a detrimental effect on your diabetes risk or blood sugar control compared to those based on plant sources like nuts or nut butter or avocado.

People who followed a plant-based low-carb diet actually had better control of their diabetes and blood sugar. There are probably a number of factors that come into play when it comes to the effect of low-carb diets on diabetes risk, such as the effect that a healthy microbiome has on blood sugar control. Including more plant-based foods in your diet will support a healthier gut microbe population, and there's evidence to suggest that a healthy gut microbe population helps to regulate the blood sugar.

But also, it may be related to the effect that saturated fat has on insulin resistance. Insulin is the hormone that we make to take sugar or glucose out of the blood and put it into cells and when the insulin can't do its job. Well, that's called insulin resistance a diet high in saturated fat increases insulin resistance because the fat is deposited in the cells, making it harder for insulin to do its job.

Saturated fat is mostly found in animal products like meat and cheese. It's also found in coconut oil and palm oil. So that's probably a big part of the reason why a protein-based low-carb diet is going to be less effective than a plant-based low-carb diet in helping to regulate blood sugars.

I will share another story about the ketogenic diet. So, some people may know that very extreme forms of the ketogenic diet are used to treat epilepsy. And again, my daughter Sarah, this is one of the things we tried when she was little. Back when she was a toddler, she started having these little, tiny brief sort of eyelid flutter staring seizures that would occur even as many as 50 or more times per day.

And then about every two weeks we were calling the ambulance for something called status epilepticus where she would go into a prolonged seizure that wouldn't stop. She was doing this often and wasn't responding to the medications. So, we traveled up to the Epilepsy Center in Chicago to a doctor that knew about her syndrome and had a good Ketogenic diet for epilepsy program, and she was admitted to the hospital.

So, the ketogenic diet for epilepsy is much more strict than a weight loss keto diet. It's managed by a registered dietitian. They calculate the number of calories that the child needs per day for growth, they calculate the amount of protein that the child needs for growth. And then what happens is they're put on it, it's basically like a prescription, like you would get for medication, but it's a diet prescription.

And so, the dietitian calculates their calories. You divide it up over three meals in a snack per day, and every single meal that they eat has the exact same number of grams of fat, protein, and carb.

And you have a little computer program where you enter the foods in, and you adjust it until you get your meal. And they're basically not allowed to eat anything that hasn't been calculated and weighed on a gram scale. Super strict. But here's what happened: that first week when we were in the hospital starting this diet, as she slowly went into ketosis over the course of the week - those 50 per day little brief eyelid flutter seizures pretty much evaporated.

They just went away. And then when we returned back home, the very last time in her life that we called EMS for a seizure was one week after coming home from the hospital on the keto diet. I think it saved her brain. Because at the time she was having so many seizures that she was losing developmental skills and some of the kids with her syndrome can't talk, can't walk, and Sarah is verbal.

She walks and talks and she's social and she loves life. She's active and goes to her adult school program. She's 20 now. As she got older the effect did wear off some, and it's not, the most benign thing you can do. We did have issues related to it. She had a lot of sinus type infections at the time.

I think that was related to all the mucus that she was making because of all the dairy she was drinking. Basically, her drink with her meal was heavy whipping cream. And I would add in some flax oil just to try to get a little healthy oil in there with that heavy high saturated fat whipping cream. But with all of that cheese and heavy cream, all of that fat, she had a lot of mucus, and she would



get sinus infections a lot and I knew as a doctor that this was not the healthiest diet.

Her carb allotment... Because she was only two, she was tiny. Her carb allotment per meal was the equivalent of about two pieces of broccoli. The rest was all bacon and sausage or that heavy whipping cream, things like that. I knew that this was not a healthy diet.

I did worry about her cholesterol and her heart. But at the time, her seizures were so bad that we thought that, if she, made it to adulthood we would consider it a success.

And it was. It was great at the time. She was on that full keto diet for about three years - from age two to five - and then we gradually weaned her off of it to what's called, a modified Atkins diet, where we didn't have to weigh out all the fat and protein foods; we just had to limit the carbs.

So, it was less strict, and we could increase her carb level over the years. But it was not a benign diet. It was worth it for us, but I wouldn't recommend it as a weight loss diet because, it does have all those problems. So anyways, that's my personal story and experience with the ketogenic diet.

What about some of the other low-carb type diets that are out there these days? For instance, Paleo, So, this diet is based on the types of foods that were presumed to have been eaten by early humans before the invention of farming and agriculture. The Paleo Diet consists chiefly of meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, but it excludes dairy, grain products, starchy vegetables, and processed food. Now the creators of the Paleo Diet did take a little bit of liberty with the evidence about what actual early hominids ate.

Cavemen and other early humans ate what they could find in their local environment, and for much of the planet that was mostly plants - especially starchy root vegetables which are eliminated in the Paleo Diet. And, because it took so much energy and risk to hunt, meat actually made up a much smaller portion of the diet according to archaeological findings. The exception to this rule would be communities in the extreme north who ate mostly fish and marine mammals because the growing season there was so short and that's what they had.

So why did they choose the geographic region that they modeled their diet on? And they also seem to have randomly chosen a certain point in time shortly before agriculture was invented. But why not go back even earlier in human

evolution? Apes are 99 percent vegetarian, so why not base the diet of what we evolved from on that?

Another common low carb kind of diet is Whole 30.

This is very similar to paleo in terms of what types of foods are eliminated. It was originally designed to just be a strict 30-day weight loss elimination diet. It's very rigid, cuts out all kinds of grains, beans, legumes, soy, dairy, sugar, and processed foods. The founders make a lot of health claims about this diet, but their claims are not based on any scientific evidence.

I would tend to say that the only healthy thing about the Paleo and the Whole30 diet is that they both recommend cutting out ultra-processed foods, refined sugar, things like that. Both diets do include a lot of meat and they cut out grains and legumes.

So, neither of these diets really has any scientific evidence to support them. In fact, the evidence supports that a high intake of meat is associated with increased rates of chronic diseases, which I've said a number of times before, and we know that there are numerous health benefits to eating whole grains and legumes.

In fact, if you've heard of the Blue Zones, the places in the world where people live to be a hundred or more, the number one thing that people in those communities eat is beans.

Not every fad diet is a low carb diet, though. Anyone old enough to remember the 1980s will recall the low-fat diet craze. Now, this did start out with good intentions. It was recognized that saturated fat, found mostly in meat and dairy, was linked to higher cholesterol levels and an increased risk of heart attacks.

So, it was logical that removing diet would be healthy, right? Unfortunately, the eighties also saw a dramatic rise in the availability of ultra-processed foods.

The food industry thought, if we take out the fat, replace it with tons of refined sugar and flour, you have a healthy snack. Voila. Unfortunately, this had the opposite effect on people's health, and we started seeing the rise of what is now called the obesity epidemic. Now we know that not all fat is bad, although the evidence linking saturated fat to high cholesterol levels, heart disease, and diabetes is stronger than ever. The science is clear. We need all three macronutrients. You need protein, fat, and carbohydrate. But you need that

Goldilocks amount. Not too much, not too little. And you need those from the right sources.

Basically, it's still a good idea to eat a lower fat diet, just don't go too extreme and don't replace your fat with tons of sugar.

The next thing I want to discuss is the Mediterranean diet. This is definitely not a fad diet. It has good evidence to support its use, so I think it deserves some discussion. First of all, what is it the Mediterranean diet, as many of you know, is based on what people in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea eat.

And several of these countries are, considered those Blue Zones where people live a long time.

Going back to 1614, an Italian, published a book, *The Fruits, Herbs, and Vegetables of Italy*. Apparently, this is still in print. In it, he criticized the Brits for eating too much meat, starch, and sugar, and he promoted the staples of his local Italian diet, which included things like fresh vegetables and fish.

So, this book was the forerunner of what is considered today to be the Mediterranean diet. So, in the Mediterranean diet, it's recommended that every meal emphasize plant-based foods like whole grains, vegetables, legumes, fruits, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices.

Olive oil is the main source of added fat, and then there's an emphasis on fish and other seafood.

Dairy and poultry are also included in moderation a couple of times per week. On the other hand, red meat, processed foods, and sweets are eaten rarely. The Mediterranean diet also advocates for drinking red wine in moderation, for those people who don't have a medical reason not to do so.

The benefits of the Mediterranean diet that are supported by the evidence include a reduced risk of heart disease, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, premature death, and potentially a reduced risk of cognitive decline with aging so you may not get Alzheimer's disease if you follow a Mediterranean diet.

However, when the Mediterranean diet was studied head-to-head with a low-fat vegan diet in a 16-week crossover study. So, a crossover study means that the participants first did one diet and then crossed over to do the other diet and then they compared the findings. There were some interesting results so, over the course of the 16 weeks, the participants in the low-fat vegan arm lost

approximately 13 pounds, whereas the ones on the Mediterranean diet did not lose a significant amount of weight. The ones doing vegan diet also lost more fat mass, particularly from the visceral fat.

Visceral fat is the fat that's around your organs and it is highly associated with increased risk of disease.

The vegan diet group also dropped their total and LDL cholesterol levels, whereas there was no significant cholesterol change on the Mediterranean diet. And don't forget they crossed over, so it's not just an individual response. In the same person, when they were on the vegan diet, their cholesterol dropped.

When they switched over to the Mediterranean diet, it went back up, or vice versa. Blood pressure decreased in participants on both diets, but it did decrease more in the Mediterranean group compared to the vegan group. So that result was opposite from the other results.

If you think about it, it's possible that the health benefits that have been shown in the medical literature for the Mediterranean diet may very well be attributable to the recommendations to reduce the intake of things like processed foods, red meat and high fat cheese, also using more olive oil instead of less healthy oils, and the overall increase in things like vegetables, whole grains, and legumes that are eaten on the Mediterranean diet compared to the standard American diet. The Mediterranean diet is essentially a whole food plant-based diet with some fish, seafood, and occasional chicken. So how much is attributable to the whole food plant-based portion of it versus, say, eating more salmon? Definitely more studies need to be done comparing the two.

Alright, so to wrap up, let's talk about a few of the pervasive myths that underlie many of these fad diets and are frequently repeated by the weight loss industry that really aren't supported by scientific evidence. So, we already talked a little bit about the first one and that is all fat is bad.

Certainly, you should avoid trans-fat. Trans fat is an artificial type of fat that's made when scientists try to take liquid vegetable oil and make it solid at room temperature to mimic the saturated fat from animals, unfortunately, trans fats have been linked to super high rates of diabetes and chronic disease, and currently should not be found to any significant amount in foods, at least sold in the US.

They've been removed from the food supply. So, like I said the myth is that all fat is bad, we should avoid trans fats, you should reduce the saturated fat in your

diet, and try to stick to plant based foods with more mono or polyunsaturated fats. These are going to come from things like nuts and avocados, foods like that.

One of the reasons to do this is to help increase the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins from our diet, which include vitamins A, D, E, and K, which we all need. So, if you want to get a little more vitamin K out of your green smoothie in the morning, toss in a few slices of avocado.

The next myth that's pervasive is that all carbs are bad, especially carbs with gluten. However, high carb foods like beans, whole grains, and fruit are definitely healthy and will not only support overall health, but can help you attain and maintain a healthy weight. It's just the refined, processed carbs that you need to watch for. And if you have celiac disease or have been diagnosed with non-celiac gluten sensitivity, then sure, avoid the gluten.

The next myth that you'll see purported by the weight loss industry is that you can lose weight with exercise alone. Unfortunately, as the saying goes, you can't outrun a bad diet. So don't waste your money on any program that claims you can eat anything you want and still lose weight. This myth is actually based on the next point, which is an almost universally believed myth, and that is that metabolism is straightforward math: the calories you eat are burned off in a one-to-one ratio. So, for instance, you can burn off that donut with an equivalent amount of exercise.

Unfortunately, metabolism is a lot more complicated than that, and that's really not how it works. But you still see this all over the place. I encourage you to read a book called *Burn, New Research Blows the Lid Off How We Really Burn Calories, Lose Weight and Stay Healthy*. It was written by a scientist named Herman Pontzer. It's a very easy read and when I read it, it pretty much blew my mind because he's done a lot of research into how we burn calories, and unfortunately, it is not a one to one ratio.

People who start exercising will burn more calories. A funny thing happens. Over a few weeks or so, the body readjusts, and the metabolic rate falls back down to its previous level, even when you continue with the extra exercise. Now, that doesn't mean you should just start using your treadmill as a laundry rack, because there are tons of really healthy benefits for exercise.

Aside from just keeping your heart and lungs healthy and growing strong muscles, the way the body balances out burning those extra calories is to take

the energy that we put into other functions away. And we're talking about things like the inflammatory response or the stress response.

So, this is Perhaps a big reason why exercise is so good for your mental health, so definitely keep exercising. Just don't do it for the weight loss.

So, the next myth, you need to eat lots of meat if you want to build muscle. This is definitely not true. In fact, in June of 2023, the Journal of Nutrition published a study titled, bear with me, it's a long title, Vegan and Omnivorous High Protein Diets Support Comparable Daily Myofibrillar Protein Synthesis Rates and Skeletal Muscle Hypertrophy in Young Adults. adults. This is a fancy way of saying that muscle was generated at the same rate in the study subjects who ate a vegan diet and in those eating a diet containing all types of food.

So, basically, you can eat a 100 percent plant-based diet, get your protein from beans and tofu, and you can be a world class bodybuilder. In fact, there are some world class bodybuilders who are vegan. So, if you're interested in learning more about the benefits of a plant-based diet for athletes, I encourage you to watch the documentary called Game Changers.

It's out there streaming in the universe just look for it online and I'm sure you'll find it. It will blow your mind. Okay, so the last myth I'm going to talk about today is that plant-based foods contain an incomplete protein. We've all heard this, that you can't get all of the amino acids from any single plant-based food and that therefore they are inferior sources of protein.

So, I do plan to do a future episode. just on protein. For now, I will simply state that all plants contain all 20 amino acids, including the essential ones that we can't synthesize. And you don't have to go to great lengths to figure out how to eat. the right combination of these plant-based foods to get the right amounts of the various amino acids to make protein.

So, relax, keep listening to Eat Your Greens, and I'll have that episode sometime in the near future. So, what about a whole food plant-based diet? Why is that not a fad diet? I mean, it's pretty popular right now, so doesn't that make it a fad? As I stated before, fad diets perpetuate the myth of a quick fix.

They promote unrealistic goals and expectations, so it's crucial to understand that sustainable weight loss requires a focus on nourishing your body and listening to its needs and then adopting healthy habits, and that's what A whole food plant-based diet is. It's a way of eating for health and longevity. It's a lifestyle habit.

To keep your meals balanced, you should include adequate proportions of macronutrients. Those are carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats. And it's important to incorporate a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables to ensure nutrient diversity.

The one thing that the fad diets discussed in this episode have in common is reducing or eliminating many of the fiber rich foods, like beans and grains. The truth is that these are among the healthiest foods you can eat, and that's for many reasons.

In fact, like I said before, the one food that the people in all of the blue zones have in common is beans. So, it makes no sense at all that these diets that suggest that you should cut out beans would be healthy.

Aside from being rich in vitamins, one of the main reasons that foods like beans and other legumes, whole grains, vegetables are healthy for you is that they are good sources of fiber. Fiber is a complex carbohydrate molecule. It's found only in plants. Another one of my upcoming episodes will focus solely on the benefits of fiber because it is so important.

So, here's your spoiler alert for that episode. The fiber in the whole plant foods does a number of things including slowing gastric emptying, and this is going to help you feel full sooner, so you avoid overeating, and the fiber also helps support a healthy diverse gut microbiome, that's the bacteria that live in the gut, and those bacteria, in turn, affect the balance of hormones that make us feel hungry or satisfied.

So, if you're really interested in a healthy way to maintain a healthy weight. I think the evidence is clear. Whole food, plant-based diet is the way to go.

Well, that brings us to the end of this episode. I hope you had as much fun listening to it as I did reading up on all the diet crazes that have swept the nation over the centuries. The bottom line is that your diet matters. What you eat on a day-to-day basis is going to be a significant determinant for your long-term weight and overall health.

Many fad diets will assuredly lead to weight loss, but they're often either not safe or definitely not sustainable. And we all know about that dieting rollercoaster with the ups and downs of your weight and also your self-esteem. And even if you do keep the weight off with something like an animal protein based keto diet, you're going to raise your risk for serious chronic diseases and literally end up shortening your lifespan.

So instead of making a New Year's resolution to lose a bunch of weight quickly, how about setting the intention to make a couple smaller changes, replacing less healthy foods with a whole plant-based alternative. If you gradually build on those changes over the course of 2024, I am confident that by the time January 1st, 2025 rolls around, you will find yourself in a much better state of health.

Thanks for listening to this episode of Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black. Parenting is a journey that comes with many challenges, but also much joy. I hope this podcast empowers you to set your family on the path to lifelong health. If you enjoyed this podcast, please hit the subscribe button so you never miss an episode.

For more helpful information about plant-based nutrition for families and children, check out the show website, [www. eatgreenswithdrblack. com](http://www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com). And don't forget to eat your greens.