

healthy LIVING

DIET HISTORY OVER THE YEARS

For nearly 2.5 million years man lived in the Paleolithic era and ate a Paleolithic diet. This diet was full of vegetables and meat with seasonal berries, seeds and nuts. The start of the agricultural age (approximately 10,000 years ago) saw grains being planted and cultivated. The consumption of carbohydrates rose very slowly until the start of the industrial revolution 250 years ago. The industrial revolution enabled crops to be planted and processed on a large scale and food manufacturing became big business, producing lots of processed food and consumable products.

We started getting fatter. The schematic below highlights the number of generations adapted to eating within each of the ages. Unfortunately the extremely fast change in the types of food and food-like products we eat today, over a short generational period, hasn't allowed our genetics to adapt to the food we eat. We are still genetically wired to eat as though we live in the Palaeolithic era. It can take hundreds, if not thousands of generations for our genome to adapt and change to fit our environment.

THE HUMAN DIET THROUGH HISTORY

Paleolithic Era: (Stone Age) - 2.5 million years from Homo habilis to Homo sapiens.
100,000 generations on a **mostly meat diet.**

Agricultural Age: Beginning 10,000 years ago
500 generations with a slowly rising amount of **carbohydrates in the diet.**

Industrial Revolution: 250 years ago
13 generations with a rapidly rising amount of **carbohydrates in the diet.**
Last 5 generations also consume an increasing amount of **processed vegetable oils and trans fats.**



Industrial Revolution Diet Trends

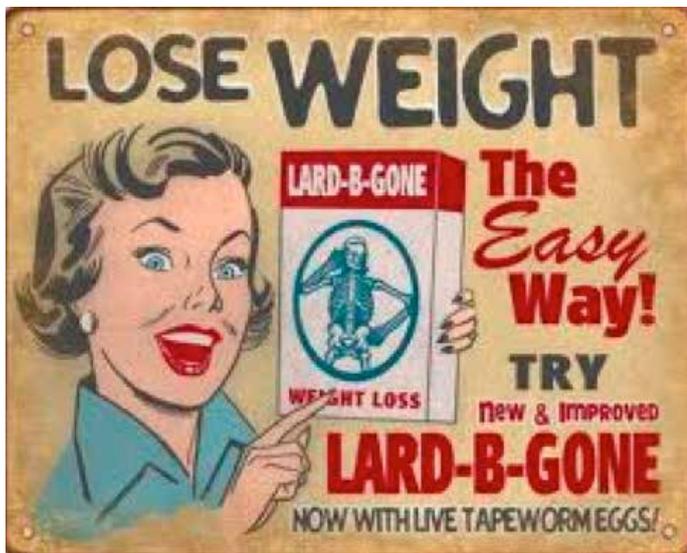
1820s Lord Byron made the Water and Vinegar Diet popular. It involved drinking apple cider vinegar and water. It is actually beneficial to add a glass or two of warm water with a desert spoon of apple cider vinegar into your daily routine to aid a healthy digestive system.

1920s Smoking was promoted as a way to lose weight, claiming appetite-suppressing properties of nicotine. There was even a campaign by Lucky Cigarette Company quoting "reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet". Of course we know how dangerous smoking is today, nearly 100 years later.

1930s The Grapefruit Diet, or Hollywood Diet, as it was referred to at the time, encouraged eating a grapefruit with every meal. Although not a dangerous diet to follow as it doesn't restrict any food groups, it is not efficacious to weight loss.

1950s The Cabbage Soup diet and the Tapeworm Diet became popular dieting trends. Maria Callas claimed to have lost 30kg by swallowing a pill containing the parasitic tapeworm (an urban legend). These were marketed as a weight loss pill at the time. Oh my, need more be said!





1960s Weight Watchers was founded in 1963 and is still today one of the most popular diet programmes. This diet focuses on calorie/energy restriction for weight loss.

1970s This decade was full of some rather wacky and downright dangerous diet plans.

- Elvis Presley was said to try the “sleeping beauty diet” which involved sedation.
- A Florida doctor said to eat only cookies made with an amino acid blend.
- Dexatrim, a dieting pill containing phenylpropanolamine (PPA) hit the market. By the year 2000, PPA was linked to an increased risk of stroke.

SlimFast, the first liquid-based meal replacements, was launched in 1977. This encouraged shakes for breakfast and lunch with a healthy balanced meal at dinner time. There are many similar products on the market today that are popular for short term weight loss, a lot of them being nutritionally balanced. Unfortunately they also tend to be a little high in sugar content.

1980s Jane Fonda, Richard Simmons, aerobics and Jazzercise became household words. The eighties started to focus on fun exercise as a way to lose weight. Oprah claimed to have lost over 30kg on a liquid diet and Jenny Craig came on the market with pre-made meals and counselling for weight loss.

1990s The ‘low fat’ eating revolution started in this decade. McDonalds also got on board with a popular McLean burger which was low in fat. The Zone Diet, which was popular amongst Hollywood celebrities, was based on a certain ratio of fat:carbohydrate:protein at each meal. The Atkins Diet came into fame with a high protein, low carbohydrate based eating plan. The Atkins and modified Atkins diets are still very much in vogue today.

2000s Here is a list of some of the more popular diets this millennium:

- The Macrobiotic Diet, based on a Japanese eating plan of vegetables and grains; Gwyneth Paltrow popularised this style of eating.
- The South Beach Diet – a version of Atkins, but not as carbohydrate restrictive, allowing for low glycemic carbohydrates and high fibre.
- The lemon cleanse came into vogue with Beyonce claiming to have lost weight drinking, hot water, with lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper.
- Dietary supplements, pills and weight loss products were in demand as “quick fixes” for rapid weight loss.
- The HCG Diet, uses a fertility drug in combination with a calorie restricted diet.
- Raw food diet, only eat foods that are raw.

Today’s Popular Diets

The most popular diets today are the Palaeolithic Diet, the Modified Atkins Diet or any other **low carbohydrate-based eating plan**. The fasting 5:2 diet, which involves eating unrestricted for 5 days and 2 days on a restricted energy intake, is also popular. All of these diets have some evidence supporting weight loss claims.

Overview of diets

Most fad diets are not compliable, ie. people find them hard to stick with. People give into cravings or give up altogether, often regaining the lost weight plus some additional weight within the next 1-5 years. In fact 95% of diets are unsuccessful. Most fad diets that restrict or severely limit certain food groups are often lacking essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. It is advisable to take a good quality multivitamin supplement when on a weight loss program to ensure you meet the nutritional recommended daily intakes (RDIs) and perhaps even a fibre supplement to ensure you are getting enough fibre (25g/day for women & 30g/day men). Remember, if you are on any medications or have any health conditions, speak with a trained professional prior to starting any weight loss programme.

The evidence is increasing in support of low carbohydrate-based eating plans for weight loss and lifetime maintenance of healthy weight. Be sure to include healthy fats and quality protein as part of a healthy eating plan. Protein helps to ensure satiety (meaning it keeps you feeling more satisfied and less hungry) and is essential for maintaining lean muscle mass, required for metabolism a.k.a fat burning. **The February 2015 edition of Healthy Living is all about protein requirements, so check it out.**