

NSA

Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease

The hunt for the perfect heart health diet

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Obesity and Type 2 diabetes are near epidemic proportions in American children and adults. At present, two-thirds of America adults are overweight (BMI > 25), 30% frankly obese (BMI >30)*, 8% are diabetic, and 24% have the metabolic syndrome.

I have reviewed countless diet books and scientific reports on diets designed to decrease weight and reduce cardiovascular risk. I picture these diets on a pendulum arc from the low fat Ornish diet to the high fat Atkins diet (see diagram). I will discuss these diets and comment on the utility and use in both weight reduction and decreasing cardiovascular risk.

My diet conclusions are:

- Ultra low fat diets are poorly tolerated
- NCEP Step I Diet is largely ineffective
- NCEP Step II Diet, low fat, with Mediterranean features, decreased saturated fat with more monounsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids is effective
- Atkins Diet gives weight loss with some risk and not useful in the long-term, at present – there are concerns
- Common Sense Diet – calorie restricted, relative carbohydrate-restricted
- South Beach Diet – carbohydrate-restricted.
- Mediterranean Diet – ideal, better tasting, proven heart protective with increased longevity
- Diet without exercise does not achieve the goal

Further Reading

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4. De Lorgeril M, Salen P, Martin JL, *et al.* Mediterranean diet, traditional risk factors, and the rate of cardiovascular complications after myocardial infarction: final report of the Lyon Diet Heart Study. *Circulation* 1999;99:779-85
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7. Trichopoulou A, Costacou T, Barnia C, Trichopoulos D. Adherence to a Mediterranean diet and survival in a Greek population. *N Engl J Med* 2003;348(26):2599-608