

PALEO DIET

Simplified

LEARN THE SPECIFIC TYPE OF DIETING AND EATING
STYLE CALLED PALEO, SIMPLIFIED.



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Introduction

Chances are you've heard the term Paleo before, and likely used in close association with Cross Fit. Paleo, short for Paleolithic, is a term that refers to a specific type of diet or eating style.

The Paleolithic era, also known as the Stone Age, was a time in which primitive people (cave men) lived as hunters and gatherers.

Their diets consisted of whatever animals they could kill or food they could gather. So, this essentially means any foods that are in their rawest or truest form and available in nature. Think back to history class and images of cavemen- lean, athletic, muscular.

I think it's safe to say if cave men sat around eating Oreos off of golden trays, their bodies would be more like what we see in the general population in our world today.

So, there's got to be something about what they were doing that worked, right? This is where Paleo diet advocates derive their argument for why it works.

They believe our bodies were physiologically created to be able to properly digest and derive energy from the original foods our ancestors ate. But with the incorporation of farming and agriculture, grains were now being grown in abundance and disease risks increased along with the crop.

The work required to obtain food has diminished incredibly over the past hundreds of thousands of years. This "diet" isn't just for people looking to shed some pounds - it's for anyone who just wants to feel and operate better. Those who practice the Paleo diet see a plethora of health benefits as a result.

- Increased vitamin, mineral & antioxidant consumption
- Improved blood sugar control

- Improvements in cardiovascular health (triglycerides, cholesterol, blood pressure)
- Natural detox for the body
- Better sleep
- Weight loss

For those of you who are not fans of calorie counting or macro tracking, the Paleo diet has an advantage. While you certainly can track these things if you wish, they aren't essential for weight loss.

If you eat only Paleo-approved (nuts, fruits, eggs, grass-fed meats, healthy oils, vegetables), you are constantly putting healthy and nourishing foods into your body. These foods aren't the ones causing our worldwide obesity and disease-ridden epidemic- processed foods are.

Whether you think the Paleo diet sounds great or not, it's hard to argue against eating natural, unprocessed foods. After all, our world wasn't slowly killing itself until we started walking down supermarket aisles through barrages of processed goods.

There's a saying that history repeats itself. Perhaps this time we ought to listen.

Healthy Foods To Eat On The Paleo Diet

When you take on any new type of eating lifestyle, it can seem overwhelming figuring out what foods you “can” and “cannot” or “should” and “should not” be eating.

Even more so, it can be confusing if you don’t understand the reasons why certain foods are good for you to eat and while others are best just in moderation. The Paleo diet is no exception.

There are many foods that are considered Paleo-friendly but that are also the basic “meat” of the eating lifestyle (no pun intended).

Here is a list of some of those foods and just why they are important to consume:

Meats:

- Salmon- Full of Omega 3’s, protein, iron, zinc niacin, Vitamins B6 & B12. These properties help fight inflammation, contain antioxidants, supply a healthy source of protein and help keep your heart healthy.
- Lean Beef- Lean cuts of beef pack a protein punch without a high amount of saturated fats. There are 29 cuts of lean beef to choose from.
- Chicken- Versatile and healthy, chicken fulfills your protein needs while giving you a variety of ways to cook and prepare it. Opt for boneless, skinless chicken. Provides for over 20% of recommended daily intake for selenium and potassium.
- Turkey- Contains protein, Vitamin C and iron. A great source of protein that can be bought either ground, sliced or as an entire breast.

Veggies:

- Beets- In a class all their own, beets contain betalains, a phytonutrient that has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and detoxification properties. Possible anti-cancer benefits have also been linked to beets.
- Kale- Extremely high in Vitamins A, K & C. Packed with antioxidants (carotenoids and flavonoids) and lutein, which helps the blood flow smoother throughout the body.
- Spinach- As with most veggies, low calorie content means you can eat a large quantity. Contains magnesium, Vitamin C and folate, just to name a few. Can possibly reduce your risk of cataracts and macular degeneration.

Other:

- Eggs- Believe it or not, eggs are a great source of both protein and fat (Omega 3's included!). They contain all 9 of the essential amino acids and contribute to your daily calcium intake.
- Avocado- Full of potassium and healthy fats, avocado consumption has been linked to lower chances of contracting metabolic syndrome and possibly increasing HDL- the good cholesterol.
- Almonds- Portable and filling, almonds are a great on-the-go snack and contain a good amount of calcium, magnesium, fiber and protein. Because Paleo diets don't incorporate dairy, this is a great way to get your calcium intake up.

As you can see, none of these Paleo diet foods are much different choices than that of any healthy person, irrespective of diet, would eat on a regular basis.

It's important to make sure you are consuming an adequate number of vitamins and minerals, especially if you are cutting stuff out of your "normal" diet as you transition to Paleo.

Above all, remember to make healthy choices because they make sense to you, not because they fall into a specific diet or fad.

Eating Healthy In A World Of Processed Foods

Too much of a good thing can be bad- at least that's what some people believe.

We're living in an age now where food is so unbelievably accessible that we find ourselves scoffing under our breath if we're in a fast food line for more than sixty-seconds.

The speed and convenience are great at times- especially for busy moms and people running from job one to job two. But too much of this has contributed to a worldwide epidemic of obesity, which is growing worse with time.

Learning to balance healthy living in a world of processed foods isn't impossible. While combo meals (what a deal!) and tempting propaganda can sometimes make healthy feel unattainable, it's not.

It just takes a little planning ahead of time and reinforcement of better choices. So, what are some things you can do to eat healthy amidst a world of processed foods?

Steam Bake or Broil- If you take a food item in its rawest form, it has the potential to stay healthy. But the way you prepare it can be a deal breaker.

Stay away from food that is fried or cooked in a batter. This applies to vegetables too, not just meats.

Get it on the Side- If you order a salad or a dish that comes with a sauce, ask for it to be served on the side. That way, you can determine how much you consume, or if you even really like the taste enough to consume the calories.

Inquire about Substitutions- If your dish comes with a side of fries, ask if you can get a baked potato instead. Restaurants are often very willing to make substitutions.

Plan Ahead- Choose a day or days of the week and designate them as food preparation days. Use these days to make several days' worth of healthy foods to bring with you to work, school, or wherever.

That way, when lunch hour rolls around, you won't be tempted with a McDonalds run.

Ask for Less- If you're ordering a sandwich, for example, which comes with barbeque sauce, ask that the waiter goes "light" on the sauce. By doing this, you will save small amounts of calories in each food item you order.

Minimize the Toppings- When ordering fast-food, stick to menu items that have the least amount of non-vegetable toppings. Try to pass on the calorie-heavy condiments and instead ask for extra vegetables. More filling, less calories.

Be a Kid Again- Order off the kids' menu. The serving sizes are smaller and oftentimes, the side "dish" is a fruit or vegetable, instead of a French fry or the like.

In the perfect world, we wouldn't find ourselves in a line of cars at a fast-food restaurant or dragging the family out to a local diner for Tuesday night dinner. Love it or hate it, processed

foods are a large part of our society, but that doesn't mean we have to be food hermits.

There is a way to make processed foods more health-friendly by making small, conscious choices each time you find yourself speaking into that talking black box.

Think You're Eating Healthy?

Let's face it- eating healthy is hard. It's not hard because it's impossible, but rather because it can be so confusing.

There are continually new studies coming out say a certain food is good, and a week later a new study says it's not. Fad, celebrity-endorsed diets come and go faster than we can keep track of. So where can you turn when you're looking for solid, reliable nutritional advice?

What makes recommendations so difficult is that there is a plethora of variances from person to person. Even if you are the same age, gender and weight as someone else, your calorie expenditure may be much different based off of lifestyle choices, level of activity, etc.

Because of that, recommendations must be taken with a grain of salt. The Institute for Medicine recommends a breakdown of carbohydrates, fats and proteins into percentage ranges (for adults):

- Carbs 45-65% of calories
- Fats- 20-35% of calories
- Proteins- 10-35% of calories

As you can see, even these ranges are quite broad. When you start talking about children, the confusion just increases. For every change in age group, activity level and/or gender, you're looking at an entirely different recommended daily caloric intake.

Because of these fluctuations, one of the best things you can do is to figure out your total caloric expenditure each day and eat around that number.

Your basal metabolic rate, or BMR, is a measure of the calories you require on a regular day-to-day basis for basic life functions. This

calculation assumes no physical activity is being performed and therefore minimal energy is being expended. To calculate BMR, there are a ton of online calculators you can use, like this one here.

If you figure out your approximate BMR and factor in physical activity, you can get a general idea of your daily caloric expenditure. Once you know this number, you can use the percentage ranges listed above to tailor your diet.

It's important to keep in mind that just like with exercise, change is a good thing when it comes to diet as well. If you find yourself starting at a macronutrient split of 45% carbs, 35% fats and 20% protein, you can later switch it up to 55% carbs, 30% fats and 15% protein, as an example.

You will find through trial and error what your body responds best to. There are numerous online and phone app programs that serve as macronutrient trackers. You could start by tracking your normal intake for a week and seeing where your macronutrient ranges fall.

What it all boils down to is finding a balance that works best for you. You may find that your answer isn't even close to what government-recommendations say, and that's okay.

Whether your goal is to lose, gain or maintain, find a system that makes sense.

Hidden Ingredients In Food Labels

For years now, the importance of reading food labels has been pounded into our heads.

Whether we're looking at the macro and micronutrient breakdowns or inquiring about ingredients, it's important to be a well-informed consumer.

You will oftentimes find that even foods that appear to have suitable macronutrients are made with some sketchy ingredients. Whether you stick to the principle of "if you can't pronounce it, don't eat it" or not, investigating what exactly makes up the foods you are eating isn't a bad idea.

There are basic "no-no" ingredients that media has plastered across their outlets and seared into our brains- high fructose corn syrup, soybean oil, etc.

But there are a ton of other ingredients that most people can neither spell nor pronounce lurking in our foods- even the healthy ones! Here are a few of these to look out for next time you find yourself reading an ingredient list.

Diacetyl: Studies found that this chemical has been linked to respiratory problems and creation of plaque in the brain that is a sign of Alzheimer's disease.

Seeing as how this ingredient produces a buttery flavor and scent, it is found most often in microwave popcorn, but also in candy, margarine and baked goods.

Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA): This ingredient is used to prevent food from spoiling. In lab tests, consumption of BHA's has been linked to causing cancer in rats and other laboratory animals. Having said that, BHA is considered to be a carcinogen.

Nitrites: If you've ever eaten a hot dog, lunch meat or processed meats of any kind, you've eaten nitrite. Nitrite is used to preserve meats and keep their color looking "fresh."

Nitrite consumption has been linked to increased colorectal/stomach/pancreatic cancer, COPD, mutations of DNA and greater risks of developing brain tumors.

Keep in mind that all the ingredients listed above and many more are viewed under a controversial scope. As with anything deemed "good" or "bad," there is science to support the claims and there is science to counteract them just as well.

Think about the back and forth nature of the food industry the past few years regarding artificial sweeteners.

Aside from ingredients, there are also some strange things lurking in your food- sometimes just for the purpose of altering color or appearance. For example, cochineal insects are ground up by the thousands, which produces a red powder.

This powder is then mixed with water to produce a red food coloring. This dye is used to color candies, juices, and most infamously, in a handful of Starbucks drinks. Tartrazine, also known as "Yellow #5," is also used as a food dye, and is found in prescriptions and food.

Yellow #5 comes from coal tar and is known to cause severe allergic reactions and side effects in some individuals, such as thyroid cancer, clinical depression, insomnia and aggravation of Carpal Tunnel.

As you can see, there are many ingredients hiding in the foods we consume every day that aren't exactly what we want to be consuming. Oftentimes, when picking up a package of essentially "calorie-free" food (Walden Farms has built an entire business around it), you will be shocked by the long list of barely-recognizable ingredients.

Some say it's the price you pay for aesthetics and to save calories, while others would rather eat the real product than put a load of fake

ingredients into their bodies. It's difficult to be on top of your game to the point where you know what each ingredient

means or where it came from. But it is safe to say that if you try to stick to foods that are closest to their true form, you can be as sure as possible that you are avoiding any hidden surprises.

How To Eat Like Your Ancestors

Whether you're a Paleo fan or not, there's certainly common ground between those who follow the diet and everyone else. Obviously, our ancestors were doing something right when it came to eat and exercise.

Food wasn't simply grabbed off a shelf, tossed into a cart and driven to your home. It was hunted, killed, prepared and cooked. Nowadays, disease abounds and even with advances in technology, our lifespans are shortening as lifestyle choices create epidemics far out of our collective control.

Little kids are obese and twenty-some year old are suffering heart attacks. So where exactly did we go wrong, and is there a way to fix it?

If you take a look at countries who still practice subsistence farming and must grow and hunt the food they consume, some things haven't changed with time.

The disease presence in these countries falls more along the lines of under nutrition than the issues we have elsewhere that are a result of over-consumption.

But there is clearly an issue in industrialized countries where while we grow food to live off of, we also mass-produce and process a much larger amount.

It wasn't until 10,000 years ago when our diets shifted from only those things we could hunt, fish and gather towards the state we're in today.

Because the number of hunter-gathers left in the world are so slim, researchers are trying to learn about their way of life before it's too late. While the development of agriculture seemed to be a step in the right direction, it's up for debate when we assess the current health state of the majority of the world's population.

In an article in National Geographic, titled "The Evolution of Diet," studies were done on the Mayan population that may be indicative of what exactly happened to our health as a result of a shift in the foods we consumed and the methods in which food was obtained.

Until the 1950's, diabetes was unheard of amongst the Maya. However, when they shifted their diets towards a more Western (read: sugar-heavy) diet, diabetes occurrences were through the roof.

There may be some tie, too, between the way we prepare food nowadays compared to how we used to. With advanced cooking methods, we serve and consume meat in a very digestible form, whereas our ancestors were eating raw or minimally cooked meats in particular.

The energy required by our bodies to break down the meats we consume is pale in comparison to the amount of work our bodies used to have to do.

Whatever way you look at it, it's quite obvious that whatever happened between then and now isn't a shift in the right direction.

Instead of dying from sicknesses that went untreated due to lack of medical care and resources, we're dying off from lifestyle diseases we've brought onto ourselves amidst the most impeccable medical technology.

Perhaps the best we can do is to ensure that we are doing our part to eat and stay healthy in a fashion that is as close to our ancestors as possible- this wouldn't be a bad case of history repeating itself.

Should You Grow Your Own Food?

It's no surprise that cooking and preparing your own food is the safest and healthiest bet. When you buy food already made, or go out to dinner at a restaurant, there is truly no way to know how it was prepared, where it came from, etc.

By cooking your own food, you can at least know for sure everything that went into its preparation from start to finish. But what if we go so far as to say growing your own food is not only the ideal situation, but also a fun, tasty and inexpensive way to ensure you are eating the freshest foods possible?

You certainly don't have to be a Martha Stewart or own hundreds of acres of land to grow your own food. The process is rather simple and just requires regular attention and maintenance.

There are a ton of methods by which you can approach growing your own food. Whether you use a raised garden, window garden, or grow them in pots, fresh veggies and herbs can be yours.

Let's take a look at the various methods of growing veggies and herbs at home, aside from the traditional ground-gardening.

Raised Garden Beds- These are ideal when the available ground soil is not of a good quality. Basically, you build a garden above the ground and fill it with healthy soil that you purchase.

Because of the elevated construction of a garden bed, water drains better. You can either purchase a raised garden bed or build your own. HGTV (Home & Garden Television) offers a tutorial on how to build your own [here](#).

Window Box- Window boxes can be used both indoors and outdoors. They are great for people with no yard space or very little yard space. Using the highest possible quality soil is recommended, as the root growth on your plants will be limited due to the depth of the window

box. HGTV offers a tutorial on how to grow veggies in a window box [here](#).

Pots- Able to be used both indoors and out, pots are a great option for growing herbs and vegetables. Picking the proper size pots is crucial when choosing different varieties of plants, you wish to grow.

One plus to using pots versus regular ground gardening is that you don't run the risk of soil-borne diseases that you would otherwise have to worry about if planting directly into the ground.

Regardless of which method you use to grow your herbs and veggies, there are some basic things to keep in mind in order to ensure a nice, healthy crop.

Only plant what you can consume- It's easy to get excited about a new adventure and plant too much. The last thing you want to do is have to throw away your hard work because you can't consume it all.

Keep in mind that vegetable varieties such as tomatoes, peppers, etc. continually grow throughout the season so from just one plant, you will get a routine crop.

Find the right spot & amount of space- Depending on what you're planting, the amount of sun required will vary. If your plants need mostly direct sunlight, be sure you're placing them in an area that is predominantly sunny.

Also, make sure you have enough space to accommodate the varieties of plants you choose to grow. Note projected growth heights on seed packets.

If you live somewhere where seasons drastically change, it's important to be prepared and know what steps you need to take to protect your garden. You can find helpful month-to-month tips for year-round gardening [here](#).

Now it's time to talk about the types of herbs and vegetables that are best suited to grow at home. Keep in mind that the best herbs and veggies you can grow are the ones that you will benefit from most.

Herbs: Basil (multiple varieties), chives, thyme, marjoram, oregano, garlic, rosemary, parsley, mint

Vegetables: Lettuce, carrots, broccoli, beans, peas, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes

Growing your own food at home is a great way to get children involved in healthy eating. Broccoli is often much more appealing to a child when they grew and harvested it themselves.

You also won't have to question how long that bag of carrots sat on the grocery shelf. There is something to be said of fresher-than-fresh foods.

One of the cool things about growing herbs in particular is that you can either use them fresh or hang them upside down to dry and use them dried.

Either way, the flavor is incomparable to store bought spices. Try starting your own garden and enjoy all the new flavors and smells!