

## What is a paleo diet?

A paleo diet is made up of lean meat, fish, shellfish, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables, roots, nuts and seeds.

It excludes a lot of the energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods that have become such a big part of the Western diet—food like refined oils and highly processed carbohydrates of various kinds, such as sugar and refined grains like wheat, rice and barley, and the foods we make from them, such as bread, pasta and noodles. It also leaves out legumes, like lentils, dried beans and chickpeas, and dairy products from cows, goats or sheep, like milk, yoghurt, cheese and butter.

The emphasis on fresh vegetables and fruit and free-ranging or wild animal products means that it's a diet low in sodium with more of its energy coming from fat and protein sources than the usual diet (which gets more of its energy from carbohydrates).

## Why paleo?

The basic idea is that we evolved for a way of life where we hunted and gathered our food and so we are healthier eating a diet closer to what we see in those ways of life.

## Why go on one?

*Reduce the risk of diabetes, stroke, heart disease and other diseases*

Research has indicated that a paleolithic-type diet significantly reduces blood pressure and the total amount of cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood stream. It also improves glucose tolerance, decreases insulin secretion and increases insulin sensitivity. Waist circumference and body-mass index also have been shown to improve.

Improvements in those measures reduces the risk of diseases like diabetes, stroke, heart disease, osteoarthritis, diseases of the gall bladder, certain types of cancer, and mental health issues, such as depression.

*Growing signs of links to autoimmune and neurological health*

In recent years, more and more research is showing that excluding or reducing cereal grains and milk products can reduce the risk of a variety of autoimmune and neurological diseases or disorders or help to manage their symptoms.

Some of that research those links are firmly established, for instance, coeliac disease is caused by the body's auto-immune system being unable to deal with to certain peptides in wheat, rye and barley. There is also evidence that eliminating cereal grains and milk products can reduce the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease, and multiple sclerosis, a disease of the nervous system—just two examples. Other studies indicate a relationship between gut health, autoimmune system health and diseases such as epilepsy, dementia and autism.

It's a complex and growing field of research with strong indications of the benefits of excluding or reducing grains and milk products in your diet.

Triglycerides come from both plant and animal sources and make up about 95% of the fat in our diet. We need triglycerides: they provide energy to our cells.

Cholesterol is another type of fat which your body uses to build cells and to make certain kinds of hormones. There are two types: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). LDL is known to cause plaques to build up in blood vessels which increases the risk of heart disease.



Sources

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