

# WHAT WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM WORKS FOR TEENS?

weight watchers? jenny craig? paleo? Atkins? GLUTEN free? OZ?

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 Eat With Knowledge

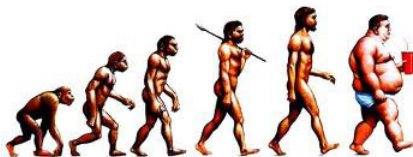
Our media is overloaded with ads for one diet or another, and we hear messages about weight loss every day. What really works? We recommend a diet plan which teaches healthy eating and exercise for life, not quick weight loss with return to unhealthy eating afterwards. Most programs have pros and cons, but long-term weight loss is about changing food choices and behaviors, not just following a plan for a few weeks! I'll share a brief description and critique of some of the common diets:



*Weight Watchers* is based on group support and counting points for weight loss. Every food is given a point value and you need to eat a certain number of points per day. This program works if you follow the points plan, and has been supported by the medical community. You learn about healthy points, and not to waste all your points on junk food! A supportive environment is key, and weight loss is best achieved with encouragement from supportive peers. The peer group does not often include many teenagers.



The *Jenny Craig* program is all about prepackaged food. You will lose weight when you eat these meals because you will limit calories. But you cannot eat pre-packaged meals for the rest of your life. Do you want to be eating a frozen meal package when everyone else is eating a real dinner? Probably not, and little is learned for healthy eating after the diet.



The *Paleo* diet (Paleolithic or caveman) is all about "eating what our ancestors ate": Fruits, vegetables, and lots of meat. This diet can be dangerous for teenagers because it lacks dairy (calcium and vitamin D) and whole grains (fiber and B vitamins). Don't fall for this gimmick! Ask yourself, would I like to live like a caveman? We've come a long way since then and so has nutrition science!



The *Gluten free* craze is one of the newest "diets" out there. Gluten is a protein found in wheat and other grain products to which some people are allergic. People with gluten allergy have celiac disease, a serious medical problem and must avoid gluten. There is no health benefit to non-allergic people when gluten is taken out of their diet. It's now a "fad" because celebrities are going gluten-free. Guess what? Most gluten-free products have more calories and fat! It's not healthier to cut out gluten and replace it with special, expensive products.



The *Atkins* diet is one of the oldest "fad diets" out there. You cut out all carbohydrates to lose weight. Unless you restrict overall calories as well, you really only lose water weight and not fat mass because your body goes into ketosis. Carbohydrates are NOT the enemy! Yes, there are healthy carbohydrates and unhealthy refined carbohydrates. Stick to healthy carbohydrates for weight loss. Teens need healthy carbohydrates for energy every single day.

The bottom line is that there is always going to be a "new and improved" fad diet out there. Oz and a zillion others! If you want to lose weight and keep it off, families need to make long-term changes one step at a time. Here are 10 tips for long-term weight loss:



**1. Learn about calories: Weight loss is all about fewer calories in than calories out.**

In order to lose weight, cut back on calories and pick healthy foods.

**2. Recognize that proper nutrition is important for growing teens**

A weight loss plan should include food from every food group for optimal nutrition. Check out [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for information on healthy eating.

**3. Control your portions**

Know the proper serving sizes. Are yours larger than what's recommended? It's helpful to measure foods and use everyday items (for example 1 cup = a baseball, 3 oz. protein = size of deck of cards).

**4. Stop emotional eating and try to listen to your hunger/satiety cues**

It's very common to use food as a coping mechanism for many feelings such as stress, boredom, anxiety, sadness, or even happiness. We can help you learn to handle these emotions in a healthier way.

**5. Dine out smart**

Seems like we can get any type of food anytime! Plan smart choices before you go out to eat. Remember portion control, try taking half of the meal home.

**6. Go grocery shopping**

Make sure your house is stocked with healthy food choices. Try to shop around the perimeter of the store for fruits, vegetables, dairy products, lean meats, and whole grains. Plan the week's meals in advance if you can.

**7. Get moving with planned physical activity**

Teenagers need 30-60 minutes of exercise per day. Include cardiovascular exercise, strength training, and flexibility. Find something fun so it's not a chore.

**8. Make mindful behavior changes**

Think about food choices. Try not to eat in front of the TV or while doing any other activities. Put your fork down in between bites and check in with your stomach to see how full you are.

**9. Don't fall for fad diets**

99% of strict diets ultimately fail. Don't start something that will not last the rest of your life!

**10. Make a big lifestyle change**

Permanent weight loss is like brushing your teeth, it becomes second nature! Change your lifestyle one step at a time for lasting results.

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