

PALEO DIET:

the good and the bad

Fads come and go – and not just hairstyles and clothing choices. Diets go through fads, too – and one of the latest is the popular Paleo diet.

The name “Paleo” refers to our Paleolithic ancestors, also known as “cavemen.” The creators of the Paleo Diet say the foods included are those that would have been eaten by our ancestors, long before humans had agriculture and modern-day processed foods.

Although eating more whole foods can be a good thing, the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says this diet isn’t in line with current healthy eating guidelines. Here’s the pros and cons to the Paleo diet:

THE GOOD: Processed foods are out. Chips, crackers, and other unhealthy processed foods are not allowed.

THE BAD: Eliminating all processed foods is difficult for most people. This could lead to frustration and diet failure.

THE GOOD: No sugar is allowed.

THE BAD: Because milk products contain natural sugar, no dairy is allowed with the exception of butter. Milk, cheese, and yogurt are good sources of calcium, and skipping them makes it difficult to get enough of this mineral in your daily diet.

THE GOOD: Promotes vegetables.

THE BAD: Only small amounts of fruit are allowed. Because of their natural sugar content, the Paleo diet doesn’t allow you to eat more than a small amount each day.

THE GOOD: You’re encouraged to eat lean meats and fish.

THE BAD: The Paleo diet suggests far more meat than the USDA advises. Diets heavy in animal fat and protein may increase your risk of heart disease due to their saturated fat content. Also, healthy vegetarian sources of protein such as beans and legumes are not allowed. These foods offer fiber and nutrients most people need in their diet and should eat regularly.



BOTTOM LINE: The emphasis on vegetables and lean meats is a good concept that can offer health benefits. But, limiting or avoiding healthy foods such as dairy and fruit limits your intake of important nutrients. The USDA Guidelines, found at choosemyplate.gov, offer a more varied – and heart-healthy – approach to eating.

Talk with your physician before starting any diet program.