

## Programs:

### **Jenny Craig**

**Best for:** Dieters who hate cooking and have trouble with portion control.

**How it works.** You eat Jenny's branded meals and snacks, plus buy your own produce, and get personal counseling in a walk-in center or by phone. Get the scoop at [jennycraig.com](http://jennycraig.com).

### **Medifast**

**Best for:** People who want to lose a lot in a hurry.

**How it works.** Most dieters start at a low, low 800 to 1,000 daily calories, eating five low-fat, low-sodium prepackaged meals, plus one "lean and green" meal (5 to 7 ounces of lean protein and some veggies). You can also choose from optional snacks. Learn more at [medifast1.com](http://medifast1.com).

### **Nutrisystem**

**Best for:** Noncooks who want to spend the least possible money on packaged foods.

**How it works.** It's all about portion control. You eat branded entrées and desserts, and low-glycemic sides and snacks that you buy based on an approved list. Learn more and order at [nutrisystem.com](http://nutrisystem.com).

### **Weight Watchers**

**Best for:** People who appreciate support.

**How it works.** You try to stick within your PointsPlus quota, a proprietary formula that factors in a food's protein, carbs, fat, and fiber. Fresh fruits and veggies count for zero Points. You get behavioral support at weekly meetings or help with online tools.

## APPS:

### **SparkPeople**

**Best for:** People who like a mobile app and also appreciate guidance.

**How it works.** You track your exercise and eating with the SparkPeople app (free for Android, Apple, and BlackBerry) and at [sparkpeople.com](http://sparkpeople.com). The two work interchangeably. If you want suggested menus and recipes, you can call up options for every meal (snacks too).

### **MyFitnessPal**

**Best for:** People who want an easy way of keeping a food diary that provides a running total of calories.

**How it works.** It's a calorie and exercise tracker you can access on a free smart-phone app and at [myfitnesspal.com](http://myfitnesspal.com). The two sync with each other, and the app is free for Android, Apple, BlackBerry, and Windows phones (search app markets for "My Fitness Pal"). You input what you eat and when you exercise; the more you move, the more calories you get!

## Nutritional Plans:

### **Atkins Diet**

**Best for:** People who love the idea of a diet that lets them eat bacon, steak, and full-fat mayonnaise.  
**How it works.** By eating next to no carbs at first, our bodies are forced to burn fat instead. As weight loss progresses, more carbs are allowed. You eat foods such as meat and seafood, fats and oils, some non-starchy veggies and full-fat dairy, but no fruits or anything with added sugar. Learn how at [atkins.com](http://atkins.com) or in "The New Atkins for a New You," by Eric C. Westman, M.D., Stephen D. Phinney, M.D., and Jeff S. Volek, Ph.D. (Touchstone, 2010).

### **Dash-Diet**

**DASH Diet.** The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension plan was developed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to combat high blood pressure. It received high rankings for its ability to control or prevent diabetes, its role in supporting heart health, and its emphasis on those healthy foods you're always told to eat and recommendation to **cut back on salt**.

**<http://www.shape.com/blogs/shape-your-life/dash-diet-named-best-diet-fourth-year-row>**

### **Glycemic Index Diet**

**Best for:** People who can't bear to give up all carbs but are willing to forgo some.

**How it works.** The Glycemic Index (GI) indicates how fast your blood sugar might go up after you eat something with carbs in it. Lower is better. Potatoes and refined grains have a high GI. Whole grains, beans, and most fruits and vegetables have a low one.

### **Low-carb Diet (other than Atkins)**

**Best for:** People who don't want to go on Atkins but think they can do well with fewer carbs.

**How it works.** We're not sure, frankly, what dieters ate--except that it was presumably low in carbs such as rice and pasta and was not the Atkins Diet.

### **Mediterranean Diet**

**Best for:** People who like Mediterranean cuisines.

**How it works.** You eat like a Greek, Italian, or Spanish peasant: plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, and fish; a small amount of meat; and olive oil galore. There's not much dairy except for yogurt and a bit of cheese, and very few sweets. You can get information online ([oldwayspt.org](http://oldwayspt.org) is a good place to start) and in numerous books.

### **Paleo Diet**

**Best for:** Carnivores who couldn't care less about dessert.

**How it works.** The idea is that we are genetically programmed to eat like our cavemen ancestors did, so we should follow their diet. That means lots of lean meat and seafood, fresh fruits, berries, and nonstarchy vegetables, but no dairy, cereal grains, legumes, processed foods, or refined sugar. Get information at [thepaleodiet.com](http://thepaleodiet.com) or in "The Paleo Diet," by Loren Cordain, Ph.D. (Wiley, 2010).

### **South Beach Diet**

**Best for:** Those who know their way around a kitchen--you'll be cooking a lot.

**How it works.** In the early phase you eat mostly lean protein, such as seafood, eggs, low-fat dairy, nuts, and high-fiber vegetables; later you add healthy carbs (whole grains, fruit--and wine!). Learn the ins and outs at [southbeachdiet.com](http://southbeachdiet.com) or in "The South Beach Diet," by Arthur Agatston, M.D. (St. Martin's Griffin, 2005).