

News in Your School

Southern Regional School District

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RD Corner



Hello! My name is Meredith Hesselein and I'm your school Registered Dietitian!

My main goals are to teach students lifelong healthy eating habits and to keep you up to date on food and nutrition news. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at:

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Current Diet Trends

A quick Google search on dietary advice pops up from every corner of the Internet citing strong support for their way being the BEST way to achieve goals. You will find endless dietary trends: everything from paleo, gluten free to Weight Watchers with everything in between. So how do you know which one is right for you?

1. The Paleo Diet

What is it?

The Paleo Diet loosely mimics nutritional patterns from the paleolithic era approximately 10,000 to 2.6 million years ago. It emphasizes consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and animal proteins, with minimal consumption of sugar, grains, legumes, dairy, and processed foods.

What does the research say?

- Lower risk for certain chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- Lower levels of systemic inflammation and oxidative stress.
- Improvements in waist circumference, triglycerides, and blood pressure. However, improvements were very small, and researchers questioned their clinical significance.

Bottom Line: Positive outcomes are associated with the paleo diet, though researchers question whether these are because of the diet itself (no grains, dairy, sugar, etc.) or the benefits of increasing nutrient dense fruits and vegetables.

2. A Plant-Based Diet

What is it?

A plant-based diet also known as Vegan or Vegetarian diet promotes high intake of foods derived from plants, and limits or completely excludes animal products (meat, poultry, fish, dairy).

What does the research say?

- A healthy plant-based diet appears to be associated with:
- A lower risk of mortality.
- A lower body mass index (BMI) in those who follow a vegetarian diet, when compared with the BMI of a nonvegetarian.
- Potential nutrient concerns for those following a strict plant-based diet: vitamin B12, zinc, and protein. Complete exclusion of all animal products puts one at higher risk for inadequate intake of these nutrients.

Bottom Line: A plant-based diet supports environmental sustainability and may lower risk of mortality and a high BMI. However, if you choose to be strictly plant-based, it's important to be aware of nutrients that may be lacking and modify your diet accordingly.

3. The Ketogenic Diet

What is it?

The ketogenic diet focuses on very low-carbohydrate intake and very high-fat intake, with the goal of using fat as the body's primary energy source instead of glucose. A medical ketogenic diet can be used to treat seizures primarily in children with epilepsy, and occasionally in adults with epilepsy as well.

What does the research say?

- One study reported that in overweight and obese men, 4 weeks of a strict ketogenic diet resulted in reduced body weight but did not alter their energy expenditure or increase fat loss.
- Another study compared a strict ketogenic diet with a nonketogenic low-carbohydrate diet and found that both diets were equally effective in reducing body weight and improving insulin resistance. However, they also found that the ketogenic diet resulted in elevated LDL and cardiac complications, in addition to adverse emotional and mental effects.

Bottom Line: The ketogenic diet may promote weight loss and improve insulin resistance but appeared to be no more effective than a less restrictive low-carbohydrate diet and may be associated with more adverse metabolic and mental side effects.



4. The Gluten Free Diet

What is it?

A gluten free diet excludes all food items containing the protein gluten. This means exclusion of anything containing wheat, barley, rye, and any derivative of these grains. A gluten free diet is recommended for individuals with Celiac disease.

What does the research say?

- Non-celiac gluten sensitivity is recognized in some individuals, and they may benefit from a gluten free diet to avoid adverse symptomatic responses to gluten.
- A study measured levels of plasma proteins involved in inflammation and observed correlation with gluten intake in young adults not affected by celiac disease. They found that increased gluten intake was associated with increased inflammation.

Bottom Line: Anyone with celiac disease is recommended to follow a gluten free diet. Some individuals may benefit from a gluten free diet due to non-celiac gluten sensitivity, but diagnosis for this condition is not yet readily available.

5. The Mediterranean Diet

What is it?

The Mediterranean diet focuses on whole foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, healthy fats and oils, poultry, seafood. Moderate consumption of dairy products is allowed however, added sugar and red meat is limited.

What does the research say?

- Lowers risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- Lower levels of systemic inflammation and oxidative stress.
- A study also showed that after 6 months of following the Mediterranean diet, participants had small reductions in blood pressure and improved vascular function.

Bottom Line: Research shows some benefits may be associated with the Mediterranean diet, related to inflammation, lower mortality risks, and reduced blood pressure.

The path to a healthier lifestyle will look different for every person and learning the research behind different diets will help you find YOUR best path. Unsure how to interpret all this research on your own? Consider talking with your healthcare provider or a Registered Dietitian. They can help you decide which lifestyle changes will best fit you and your goals.

Article adapted from:
American Society for Nutrition

<https://nutrition.org/a-healthier-lifestyle-in-the-new-year-the-evidence-behind-5-diet-trends-for-2019>



Veggie Packed Quinoa Fried “Rice”

This fried rice is made with quinoa instead of rice and packed with baby greens. Dollop with hot sauce and get your healthy on!

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups uncooked Organic Quinoa (5 cups cooked)
- 4 green onions
- 1 yellow onion
- 2 to 3 carrots (about 1 cup diced)
- 4 large garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 Eggs
- 5 ounces (about 5 cups) Mixed Greens: Baby Green Kale, Baby Spinach and Baby Chard
- 4 tablespoons Soy Sauce or liquid aminos
- Sriracha, for serving



Instructions:

1. Cook the quinoa. Using a strainer, rinse the quinoa under cold water, then drain it completely. Place the quinoa in a saucepan with 3 cups water. Bring it to a boil, then reduce the heat to low. Stir once, then simmer where the water is just bubbling for about 17 to 20 minutes, until the water has been completely absorbed. Remove from the heat, cover the pot and allow the quinoa to

steam for 5 minutes, then fluff the quinoa with a fork. Cool the quinoa by spreading it into a single layer on a baking sheet and freeze for 5 to 10 minutes. If making in advance, refrigerate the quinoa until serving.

2. Slice the green onions and yellow onion. Peel and dice the carrots. Mince the garlic & ginger.
3. In a very large skillet, heat the oil over medium high heat. Add the onion and white and light green portions of the green onions and sauté until translucent, about 3 minutes, then add the carrots and sauté for 3 minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and sauté for 2 minutes.
4. Add the quinoa and salt and stir to combine. Make a well in the quinoa, exposing the pan, and crack the eggs into the pan. Scramble the eggs and cook for several minutes until they are soft, then stir them into the quinoa (resist the urge to stir them into the quinoa until they are cooked). Add the baby greens and continue to stir until they are fully wilted, about 1 to 2 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the soy sauce and green onion tops and mix.
5. If desired, drizzle with sriracha and/or additional soy sauce. Serving suggestion: serve with boiled edamame in the pods for a filling meal.

NOTE: Omit the eggs for a Vegan friendly meal.

Recipe adapted from: <https://www.acouplecooks.com/veggie-packed-quinoa-fried-rice/>