

# Aging Healthfully Newsletter

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## A New Year A New Fad Diet

The holidays are over and that usually means the food-centered gatherings and indulgent holiday meals have ended as well...



New Years is often a time of reflection and setting goals for the year to come. Many individuals set New Year's resolutions that are focused on changing their eating and/or exercise habits to help them lose weight or improve their health and well-being.

Weight gain and addressing health conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes cannot be fixed overnight and should occur over a gradual and sustainable process.

Our society's fixation on a quick-fix solution to lose weight, makes it easy for people to fall for a fad diet, which promises quick results without having to put in much effort or make any real changes.

Let me introduce you to a **Fad Diet** – They are not always easy to spot and may seem like a true solution, coming from a so-called “expert,” but they are not.

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## How to Spot A Fad Diet:

- **Specific food combinations** – only allowed to eat certain foods together at the same time or meal to lose weight – there is no evidence to support these claims.
- **Promises rapid weight loss** – this is an immediate red flag. Losing weight rapidly is never done in a healthy way and you will lose body water, bone, and lean muscle mass (not what you want to lose).
- **Lists foods as “good” or “bad” for you** – this is an unhealthy way to categorize foods and leads to guilt if you consume the “bad” foods.
- **If it sounds too good to be true it almost always is.**
- **Elimination of one or more food groups** - fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, dairy or calcium-rich dairy alternatives.
- **No need to exercise** – another red flag, regular exercise and a healthy diet go hand in hand.
- **The diet has “testimonials”** – if it seems like they are trying hard to sell it to you – they are!
- **Recommendations based on a single study** – beware of studies that ignore the differences among gender, race, individuals, or groups, and those that have not been peer-reviewed.
- **Strict menus** – following a rigid menu is not a lifelong solution or way to eat. Ask yourself, can I eat this way for the rest of my life? If your answer is no, then you know it is a fad diet.
- **Recommendations are made to help sell a book or product** – another red flag, if someone is making a profit, it is likely a fad diet.



### **Tips to improve your overall health:**

- If you are overweight, see a registered dietitian about how to lose weight in a safe and healthy way.
- Be physically active every day or exercise at least 150 minutes each week –  *speak with your doctor about what level and type of activity is best for you.*
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains as opposed to highly processed foods like sweets and prepackaged snack foods.
- Eat a diet that is high in fiber – fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans are packed full of fiber.
- Quit smoking if you currently smoke.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you consume.

For a personalized approach that is tailored to your food preferences and lifestyle, consult a [registered dietitian nutritionist](#) (RDN). A RDN can help you with setting realistic goals with a flexible eating pattern that will improve your overall health.

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### **February is American Heart Month**

The help raise awareness about heart disease, plan to wear red on **National Wear Red Day**®, which is the



To bring awareness to how common heart disease is, here are the unsettling facts:

- Heart disease is still the **number one cause of death** in the United States.
- Both men and women are affected by it, but slightly **more than half** of all people who die from heart disease are men.
- One person dies every 37 seconds in the United States from cardiovascular disease.
- In the United States, **someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds**.
- **About 1 in 5** heart attacks are silent—the damage is done, but the person is not aware of it.
- **Having high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and smoking** are key risk factors for heart disease.
  - About half of Americans (~47%) have at least one of these three risk factors.
- **Other medical conditions and lifestyle choices that can put people at greater risk for heart disease, include:**
  - Diabetes
  - Being overweight or obese
  - Eating an unhealthy diet
  - Physical inactivity
  - Excessive alcohol use

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**Reducing Salt in Foods and Beverages**

Americans are still eating too much salt (sodium) in their diet. The most common sources of salt come from eating and drinking foods in which sodium chloride or *salt* has been added.

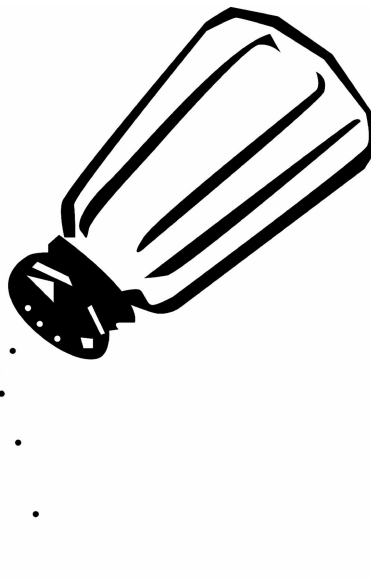
- Over 70% of total sodium intake comes from foods that have been manufactured or processed (not in their original state).
- On average, Americans are consuming well over 3,400 milligrams of sodium per day.

The recently updated [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), recommends individuals aged 14 years and older to limit their sodium consumption to 2,300 mg per day.

In October of last year, the Food and Drug Administration announced a [voluntary sodium reduction](#) over the next 2 ½ years in commercially processed, packaged, and prepared foods to reduce excess population sodium intake.

While it is “[voluntary](#)” guidance, continued pressure on reducing sodium levels in these foods will encourage food manufacturers to take the necessary steps to comply and share the responsibility for our nation’s health and risk for developing heart disease.

Do you think you consume more salt than you probably should? Watch this short [video](#) to learn about 4 ways you can cut back on sodium gradually.



## What is a “Superfood”

Have you heard of the term “Superfood,” and can a food really be super?

Will eating superfoods prevent certain diseases like heart disease or cancer?

**A superfood is a term for any food that contains multiple health-promoting nutrients compared to another food in the same category.**

For example, salmon can be referred to as a superfood because it contains many more health-promoting nutrients compared to a white fish like catfish.

**The truth is, while superfoods may be high in essential vitamins, minerals, nutrients, antioxidants, and/or phytochemicals - If you have a poor diet, then eating 1 cup of blueberries and a piece of salmon for dinner each day are not necessarily going to prevent you from getting heart disease.**

There are many factors such as our genes, our age, and lifestyle factors that play a role in the development of diseases.

Some of these factors such as genes and age we do not have control over, while your lifestyle is something you have control over.

**Superfoods must be consumed along with an overall balanced and healthy diet to work as a team and have the greatest protective benefit against some of these diseases.**



## Things You Can Do To Improve Your Diet:

- Balance your plate with a small portion (3-4oz) of lean protein at your meals.
- Eat a small portion (baseball size) of grains – opting for whole grains over processed ones or starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes or corn.
- Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies – eat as many colors as possible every day!
- Choose plain low-fat or non-fat dairy products or calcium-fortified dairy alternatives.
- Consume a variety of these “superfoods” listed below. Some of these foods should be consumed in moderation (For example: dark chocolate, wine, and nuts).

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## Popular Superfoods

- **Salmon** is a fatty fish that is low in saturated fat and high in omega-3 fatty acids, which can decrease the risk of abnormal heartbeats, reduce triglycerides (the chemical form of fats in most foods and in your body) and slow the growth of plaque in the arteries.
  - The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two 3.5-ounce servings of fish a week.
- **Fermented Foods** contain healthy gut bacteria that help return your gastrointestinal tract to a normal balance of

healthy bacteria.

- A few benefits include boosting your body's ability to fight infections, improved immune system, and decreased inflammation in the body.
- Examples include kefir, kombucha, kimchi, sauerkraut, yogurts that state they contain "live and active cultures," and other cultured dairy products.
- **Berries** like blueberries and strawberries have high levels of phytochemicals called flavonoids.
  - One study showed that women who consumed more blueberries and strawberries had a lower risk of heart attack.
  - The American Heart Association recommends nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day, about 4.5 cups.
- **Quinoa and Amaranth** – which are "pseudo grains" (meaning they are not true grains) are full of fiber, nutrients, and are both relatively high in protein.
- **Flaxseed and Chia Seed** are packed full of heart-healthy omega-3 fats, fiber, and full of antioxidants.
- **Pumpkin** is low in calories, high in fiber and high in vitamin A.
- **Kale** provides vitamins A and C, potassium, and phytochemicals.
- **Nuts and Legumes** are good sources of protein and polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats when eaten in moderation.
  - Examples include unsalted almonds, peanuts, pistachios, and walnuts.
  - The American Heart Association recommends getting four servings a week.
  - Limit the amount to 1/4 to 1/3 cup for a serving.
- **Plain Low-Fat or Nonfat Yogurt** provides calcium, vitamin D, probiotics, and protein.
  - It can also be a good substitute for sour cream in recipes.
- **Dark Chocolate** is high in flavonoids, but fat and



calories too.

- Treat yourself in moderation to avoid weight gain.
- Make sure you choose at least 70% or higher to ensure the most flavonoids and the least amount of added sugar.
- **Red Wine** in moderation may have some health benefits, but that doesn't mean more is better.
  - In fact, high alcohol consumption can have negative effects on health, such as increased triglyceride levels, high blood pressure, and liver damage.

Click [here](#) for a crisp apple and kale salad recipe.

Click [here](#) for a filling baked blueberry oatmeal breakfast recipe.

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For previous editions of the Aging Healthfully Newsletter or to find the newsletter offered in a different \*language [click here](#).

\*Translated versions of the newsletter may not be posted on the site right away.  
Please check back often!

**Note:** *The content of this newsletter is not intended to diagnose, cure, or treat any medical, health or other condition. You should seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.*

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