

# Modern Diets: Practical Versus Nutritious Eating Patterns



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In recent years, people's eating habits and dietary choices have changed noticeably. Such changes are affected by life's fast pace, busy schedules and lifestyle, influence of social media and digital marketing and the growing effect of nutrition and health awareness. Consequently, individuals' modern diets vary widely; from practical, easy-to-grab and highly-processed food to healthy and nutritious eating patterns.

Many individuals, specifically ones with overloaded daily schedules, depend on quick, ready-to eat meals for time saving purposes. Most of these products are known for their low nutritional quality, high content of unhealthy saturated fats, trans-fat, sugar and salt and often lack the body's essential nutrients such as fibers, vitamins and minerals. Consequently, these dietary patterns tend to contribute to the rising rates of obesity, public health issues and chronic diseases like diabetes mellitus, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

It is worth noting that the influence of social media enhanced the intake of nutrient-poor eating patterns in several ways. Creating viral trends, "what I eat in a day" and challenges around ingesting calorie-dense large portion sizes transformed traditional healthy eating habits into trend-oriented ones. In addition to that, creative packaging techniques, attractive influencers promotions and appealing digital marketing campaigns also controlled

and influenced consumers' desire and purchasing behaviors. Additionally, the rise of online food delivery applications simplified the access to quick, less nutritious food choices instead of preparing healthy, balanced and quick homemade meals. Also, supermarket shelves are mostly overstocked with a variety of packaged snacks, frozen ready-made meals, ultra-processed products and fast food options that are time-saving and easy to consume without even realizing the calorie content. Besides, many food products are marketed as "healthy"; more specifically low in fat; high in fibers; or packed with specific vitamin/mineral, among others. Nonetheless, taking a closer look at the Nutrition Facts label reveals that these items are actually loaded with added sugars or sweetened with honey or syrups to improve their taste. This marketing strategy targets consumers choice of pursuing healthy food items while unintentionally ingesting high amounts of hidden sugars.

In addition to social media trends, the trend of depending on dietary supplements instead of natural food sources is recently growing fast. People nowadays are relying more on pills, shakes, powders and drinks rather than obtaining and fulfilling their daily macronutrients and micronutrients requirements from whole foods. Whole foods are usually known to provide several essential and beneficial nutrients such as antioxidants and fibers, that cannot be completely delivered by turning to pills and supplements. This shift toward supplements reflects individuals' lack of time that makes it harder for them to maintain a balanced diet pattern, and their false beliefs that these supplements deliver the missing nutrients from their regular eating patterns.

When discussing modern dietary patterns, fad diets cannot be ignored. In the past years, many tend to follow fad diets opting for quick weight reduction. Ignoring long-term effects of such diets, individuals are placed on very-low calorie diets that restrict the intake of certain macronutrients or eliminate one or more food groups to fasten weight loss results. It must be highlighted that these

diets achieve unsustainable results and can lead to vitamin/mineral deficiencies, muscle loss, water loss and several health issues that can directly lead to the development of chronic diseases.

Despite the overloaded and packed daily routine, it is worth mentioning that a growing number of individuals are becoming more nutrition-aware, engaging in a variety of physical exercise programs of their choice and convenience and enjoying evidence-based balanced and nutritious diet patterns. Among these patterns, **the Mediterranean diet has gained worldwide credit in the field of Nutrition and Dietetics for its well-known health benefits such as reducing the risk of heart diseases, hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus, obesity, cancer, respiratory diseases, bone diseases, among many other conditions.** Focusing on the consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes,

olive oil, and fish, this diet is considered a preventative tool as well as a treatment to several health conditions. By adopting it, people are prioritizing their long-term health and wellbeing rather than compromising it for obtaining quick results or saving time.

Always remember, an individual's health comes first. Nutrition and effective meal preparation run hand in hand. Healthy meals can also be convenient, easy-to-grab or prepared ahead of time. With the right planning and choosing adequate ingredients, healthy meals can be quickly prepared and stored, helping individuals follow healthy diets even with busy schedules. Shifting to a healthy lifestyle characterized by moderation combined with regular physical activity can help individuals protect their health while alleviating their chances of developing chronic diseases.

