

Atkins vs. Paleo: Comparing Best Diets For Health



When people think of protein-rich diets, the Atkins diet and the Paleo diet are two of the first to come to mind.

Both of these diets have several things in common, from the foods they include to the foods they restrict. However, when comparing the two, there are also key differences to consider.

When it comes to the Atkins vs. Paleo diet, which is better for overall health? Which promotes greater weight loss? Do experts recommend one over the other? Read on to learn about the differences, benefits, and research on the Atkins diet and the Paleo diet, and to determine which is best for you.

What Is the Atkins Diet?

The Atkins diet, developed by cardiologist Dr. Robert C. Atkins, is a low-carb diet that is high in fat and protein. The diet is split into four phases designed to bring you from introduction to lifetime maintenance.

The diet's ultimate goal is weight loss, which it achieves by restricting carbs and putting the body into a state of ketosis. Dr. Atkins argues that eating too many refined carbs (such as sugar or white flour) leads to health problems

including obesity, cardiovascular issues, and imbalances in blood sugar.

Foods Allowed on Atkins Diet

The Atkins diet is low in carbs and high in fat and protein. What you eat may vary on the four different phases of the diet. In general, foods you typically consume on the Atkins diet include:

- Meat (including processed meat, pork, and bacon)
- Fish and Seafood (including salmon, trout, and sardines)
- Eggs and Full-Fat Dairy (including yogurt, cheese, cream, milk, and butter)
- Nuts and Seeds
- Low-Carb Vegetables (including leafy greens, broccoli, and asparagus)
- Healthy Fats (including avocados, olive oil, and coconut oil)
- Herbs and Spices

What Is the Paleo Diet?

“If a caveman didn’t eat it, neither should you.” This statement is the basis of the Paleo diet, a hunting-and-gathering diet and lifestyle popularized by scientist Loren Cordain.

The diet concentrates on whole, unprocessed foods and eliminates grains, dairy, sugar, alcohol, vegetable oils, legumes, and processed foods. By focusing on the foods our primal ancestors consumed, the diet is designed as part of a lifestyle for optimal health. The Paleo diet is generally high in fat, high in animal protein, and low-to-moderate in carbohydrates.



What to Eat on the Paleo Diet

The Paleo diet is built around whole, unprocessed foods, grass-fed meat, vegetables, fruit, and healthy fats. Foods you typically consume on the Paleo diet include:

- Grass-Fed Meat (including chicken, beef, wild game, turkey, and lamb)
- Wild-Caught Fish and Seafood (including salmon, shellfish, shrimp, and tuna)
- Free-Range Organic Eggs
- Fruit (including apples, oranges, bananas, and berries)
- Vegetables (including leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, and starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes)
- Healthy Fats (including avocado, coconut oil, tallow, and olive oil)
- Nuts and Seeds
- Herbs and Spices



The Differences Between the Atkins and Paleo Diets

While both diets restrict grains and sugar, there are several differences between the Atkins and Paleo diets.

The Atkins diet allows foods that the Paleo diet restricts, including dairy, soy, and even processed foods (as seen in the Atkins diet line of pre-packaged foods). Similarly, the Paleo diet allows foods that are off-limits in the Atkins diet, such as fruit and starchy vegetables. The Paleo diet does not limit carbs or promote calorie-counting; carbs in the form of fruit and starchy vegetables can be eaten at will.

Both diets eliminate sugar and grains, although grains can be introduced back into the Atkins diet at later phases. Generally, the Atkins diet focuses more on weight loss than the Paleo diet does.

Atkins vs. Paleo: Which is Healthier?

Both the Atkins diet and the Paleo diet have received criticism and backlash over the years.

One point that nutritionists can agree on is that both the Atkins and Paleo diet promote nutrient-dense foods and limit refined sugar and overly-processed foods. However, the foods that the diets exclude are shown to be a vital part of a well-balanced diet. Whole grains, for example, are an excellent source of fiber and are linked to lower mortality rates, lowering risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even obesity.

The Atkins diet does allow for certain foods that the Paleo diet does not, including calcium-rich dairy, legumes, potatoes, and cereal grains at certain phases. Because of this, the Atkins diet is seen as less restrictive and easier to follow than the Paleo diet.

The Atkins diet stresses and promotes weight loss, whereas the Paleo diet promotes overall health. Several studies show that a low-carb diet can be extremely successful in treating obesity and lowering triglycerides and cholesterol, especially when compared to a low-fat diet.

When comparing Atkins vs. Paleo diets, Atkins has been criticized for not stressing the importance of quality meat like the Paleo diet does. The Atkins diet also receives backlash for its packaged products, including bars made with processed corn, wheat, artificial sweeteners, and artificial flavors.

What are your thoughts on the Atkins vs. Paleo diets? Do you follow either plan? Let us know in the comments below.