

# Starting Paleo: How To Transition To A Paleo Diet The Right Way

The Paleo diet is one of the hottest trends in health. Go to practically any restaurant or grocery store, and you'll see all kinds of Paleo-friendly options popping up.

Unlike most diets, Paleo isn't a diet as much as a framework for better health. The idea is to eat as our ancestors did before the agricultural revolution because our bodies evolved to thrive on those foods.

There's no shortage of people out there - including professional athletes or even celebrities like Tim McGraw and Jessica Biel - who have "gone Paleo" and thrived.

If you're ready to give this lifestyle a try and stick with it, keep reading to find out how!

## Is Going Paleo Easier Said Than Done?

Almost everyone dreams of a healthier lifestyle. But actually taking the plunge is easier said than done.

For many of us, it's easy to get started when our motivation is high. The challenges arise when time goes on, and our willpower wanes against unhealthy (and deeply-ingrained) habits.

This can lead to a lot of false starts. We try and try again to eat healthier, but we can't seem to get over that initial hump before things start to get easier.

The benefits of a healthier lifestyle - less time in the doctor's office, more energy, enthusiasm, and even a new outlook on life - sometimes seem tantalizingly out of reach.

# Why Most New Diets Fail

Ever tried a new diet that didn't work out?

What happened?

You probably blamed yourself. It's so easy to do this - to chalk up dietary failures to a lack of discipline, effort, or something else.

The reality is different. Most people who struggle to stick to a new diet don't have a problem with themselves; they struggle with the planning and logistics needed to make the switch.

Instead of beating yourself up, you're better off setting yourself up for success.

## How to Make the Switch to the Paleo Diet

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you switch to the Paleo diet.

### 1. Decide If You're Going to Go Gradually or Dive in

The first step to adopting a healthier diet is to figure out how you'll do it.

There isn't a set formula here. It comes down to your personality and tolerance for discomfort. Most people fall into one of two camps: people who like to make changes gradually or those who love to just dive in.

How have you changed any habits successfully in the past? How did you do it?

That will give you a better clue about the best approach for you. Slow and steady works well for a lot of people because it's only moderately uncomfortable. The potential downside: it takes longer to switch fully to Paleo than it would if you quit your old diet cold turkey.

If you want to switch gradually, you could pick one type of food or drink

prohibited on the Paleo diet per week. With the exception of that item, you could keep your eating habits exactly how they are.

Each week builds on the last. So in the first week, you might give up sodas, and the second you'd keep avoiding sodas and also bread. Once enough weeks pass, you'll find yourself with a much healthier diet than before.

A general guideline: the worse your diet is right now, the better you'll probably do well with a gradual approach. Because the Paleo diet can be so different than how many people eat, it might get too uncomfortable to give up all the old eating habits at once.

On the other hand, some people prefer the cold turkey approach. They decide that as of a certain time they no longer eat or drink anything forbidden on the Paleo diet. That transition can be bumpier, but you'll get it over with faster than you would gradually.

Bottom line: figure out which approach works best for you. If you try one way and don't succeed, you can always switch to the other.

## **2. Change Your Environment**

So much of our eating happens on a subconscious level. We don't even think about it, but we're shoving food in our mouths regardless.

It takes time to rewire all these little habits. Your brain might be full of little associations like "it's three in the afternoon so it's time to go to the vending machine and grab a chocolate bar."

Even if you have the willpower of a monk, it's hard to constantly stay vigilant and watch yourself. Your environment - and the habits it creates - ends up getting the best of you despite your good intentions.

Switching to Paleo is already a challenge. There's no reason to make it even harder on yourself by relying on your willpower alone.

Instead of willpower, why not change your environment?

The easier it is to make smart food choices - and the harder it is to make poor

ones - the easier it becomes to stick to the plan.

Once you decide how you'll go Paleo (gradual or cold turkey), set yourself to succeed by changing your environment accordingly. It's time to ditch those candy bars and sodas in the fridge, and stock it with some fruits and vegetables instead.



Switching to Paleo becomes a lot easier if your spouse or family is on board. Once the pantry and fridge are full of only healthy options, eating healthy becomes the default choice.

Wherever you can, put barriers between yourself and problem foods. You'll eat that ice cream in the freezer eventually. But you probably wouldn't if it meant getting dressed and going to the store to buy some!

### **3. Timing and Planning**

The first few weeks of switching to Paleo are crucial. Once you get through them, it's a lot easier to stick to the lifestyle because you'll really start to notice the benefits.

But how likely do you think you are to succeed if it means having to go to the grocery store after a super stressful day at work?

Do everything you can to make a smooth transition. First, pay attention to the timing when you decide to switch to Paleo. It's probably a bad call to start on Monday of a hectic week. But if you start on a Friday (going into the weekend), it's easier to get those first few days under your belt with less stress.

Once you decide when you're going to start, plan out a week's worth of meals in advance. Go to the grocery store and stock up on everything you need. Try to keep the burden of having to cook every night as light as you can.

A slow cooker is your best friend here. In just a few minutes of prep before work, you can come home to delicious stews, chili, and countless other dishes after work. If you don't have much time to cook during the week, batch cook a bunch of meals on the weekend and separate portions for that week with Tupperware.

## **4. Make Sure You're Consuming Enough Calories**

This problem might sound like a dieter's dream, as most people have to worry about consuming too many calories. But Paleo newbies can actually have the opposite struggle.

Many of the foods that Paleo prohibits - sugars, grains, and trans fats - are calorie-dense but don't do much to keep you full. It's super easy to have a 400 calorie slice of pizza and feel hungry an hour later. But try to eat the equivalent calories in spinach, and there's hardly enough time in the day to do it!

Paleo foods are nutrient-dense and lower in calories, so it's easier to undereat. If you're feeling hungry and cranky or the number on the scale is dropping too quickly, it's time to focus on some of the higher calorie options Paleo allows.

Having more of the foods below will help you get the calories you need:

- Animal products (especially fatty cuts of beef and pork)
- Avocados

- Nut butters (almond, cashew, etc.)
- Nuts
- Oils (coconut, olive, etc.)

Those foods, which are rich in healthy fats, will keep you feeling fuller than the sugary carbs many of us eat today.

## **5. Beat Cravings and the “Low-Carb Flu”**

Chances are, your Paleo diet will contain a lot fewer carbohydrates than the typical modern diet. You’ll still get some carbs from produce and starches, but it tends to be less than you’d get from bread and grains.

This can shock your system for the first few days. Your body is used to consuming a lot of carbohydrates (and processing them into sugar), but when you switch to Paleo, your primary energy source becomes fat.

Ultimately, relying mostly on fat for energy results in stabler energy than the spike and crash roller coaster most people deal with after tons of carbs. But it takes time for your body to adjust.

As you cut down your carbs, you might experience symptoms like:

- Fatigue
- Food cravings
- Headache
- Hunger
- Mood changes

Mark Sisson of Mark’s Daily Apple even coined a term for this: the “low-carb flu.” It can be uncomfortable for a few days, but if you push through it, you’ll find yourself with a clearer mind and even more energy than before.

Give yourself permission to take a nap if you’re feeling tired those days, or have a snack if you get cranky. Don’t be afraid to take an Advil or two to get through the headaches.

You might also find yourself craving the foods you used to love.

Instead of fighting them, you can give in – in an intelligent way!

The internet is full of countless Paleo-friendly recipes of your favorite treats. Choosing these will let you enjoy the indulgences you love without the guilt that comes after doing something bad for your health.

It comes down to smart replacement. If you like to munch on Snickers bars, you can try to replace them with a square or two of dark chocolate. You can make gluten-free cookies and other baked treats too. And fizzy drinks like sparkling water or kombucha are healthy alternatives to sugary sodas.

## **Bonus Step: Don't Give up!**

Remember, the Paleo diet isn't about perfection. It's an ancestral framework for better living. If you make the right choices most of the time, you'll feel (and look) remarkably better than the average person.

Small, gradual improvements make a huge difference over time.

It's kind of like compound interest. It might not seem like much, but ditching sugary sodas (for example) might make the difference between building your dream body and struggling to lose weight.

The steps above are meant to ease your transition, but they aren't a rigid formula. Once you start eating Paleo, you can always tweak them for a lifestyle that works for you.

## **Invest in Your Health**

Switching to the Paleo diet might be a radical departure from how you eat today. But it doesn't have to be a nightmare.

A lot of people beat themselves up for not being perfect or falling back into unhealthy habits. A better course of action is to assess where you went wrong - and make subtle tweaks to improve it.

If it's a lifetime of vibrant health you seek, every little improvement matters. Give the tips above a try, and stick with them, and you'll find yourself with a lot more energy and maybe even a new outlook on life.

There's no better time to start than today. Your health is more than worth it!

Have you ever tried to switch to the Paleo diet but fell back into bad habits? Where did you struggle the most? Leave a comment below and share your experience!