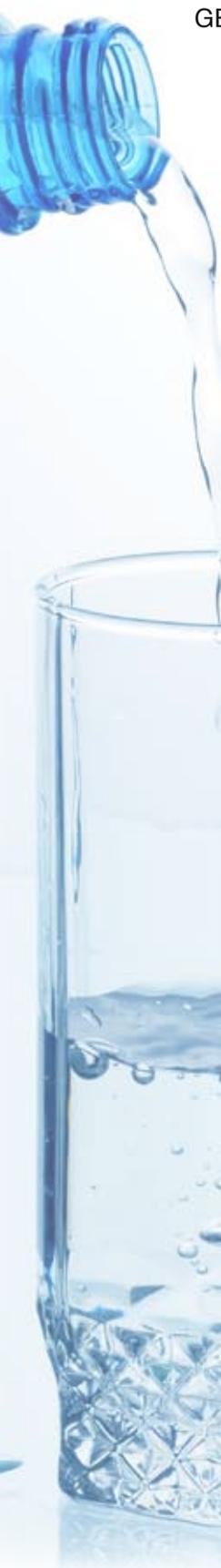


WATER DIET 101

GET THE FACTS ON WHAT THE LATEST TREND IN DIETING OFFERS – AND LACKS. BY JOANIE FALETTO



We've all seen some pretty extreme fad diets gain their 15 minutes of fame. First debuted in the late 90's, the so-called "water diet" has recently been experiencing a revival, but there's more to this plan than you may think. Between its several iterations, the message remains clear as a glass of H₂O: hydration is key to your health.

THE ORIGINAL WATER DIET

First published in 1997 by the Institute of Psychoactive Research, the original water diet is simple: Drink 64 ounces of pure, cold water throughout the day without altering your current diet. Calories are burned, the theory holds, as your body heats the cold water up to normal body temperature. Though she notes that water is necessary for every bodily function from digestion to energy levels, Dawn Jackson Blatner, R, LDN, spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and author of "The Flexitarian Diet," is not eager to endorse the plan.

"This is not a diet," Dawn says, "just one tip to live a healthier life. But by no means should this be the sole focus of a healthy diet."

Drinking half a gallon of water daily flushes toxins from the body and rewards you with the benefits of hydration, but the number of calories you burn from heating up the cold water is insignificant and keeping an otherwise unhealthy diet is not doing you any favors.

THE AQUAVORE DIET

William H. Dunn, MD, created a diet plan that quantifies food in an unfamiliar way. Dr. Dunn took the terms low-carb, low-fat and high-protein out of dieting and inserted water-rich. The aquavore plan suggests choosing foods with high water contents to keep you hydrated and feeling full on fewer calories. Because water-rich foods are

generally the healthiest options, this thought process naturally keeps you away from consuming excess carbs, sugar and fat. However, water-rich foods don't fulfill all of your body's needs.

"The majority of our energy to keep us alive and kicking is from carbs and starches, or foods that break down into sugar. It's important to have a balance of all nutrients," says Jennifer Vimbor, MS, RD, LDN, CDN. "In order to be and feel healthy and fit, be sure to have a lean protein, complex carb or starch and/or a fruit or veggie with every meal. Balance is key."

BEFORE, DURING & AFTER

This diet recommends drinking an eight-ounce glass of water, you guessed it, before, during and after every meal. While this may seem excessive, it's actually an effective way to interpret what your body is trying to tell you.

"Many of us confuse hunger and thirst signals," says Dawn, "so drinking water through the day and before meals makes sense to take the edge off of thirst, which leaves us with a more accurate feeling of true hunger."

This diet takes thirst out of the equation so you know that when your body's asking for fuel, it needs food. By staying filled up with water, this weight control strategy helps you clearly recognize when you're hungry and when enough is enough.

However, quenching your thirst may not be the solution to everyone's excessive food cravings. Judy E. Manisco, LDN, notes, "Hunger is a natural human mechanism. Before we venture out to turn off hunger, we should first identify what may be triggering 'the excess.' It's important to look at the body as a physiological whole."

10 WATER-RICH FOODS

MELON (93 percent water) The sweetness of watermelon or honeydew can replace those ever-present sugar cravings.

RADISH (95 percent water) Besides having many varieties, radishes also contain sulfurous compounds, which protect against some cancers.

LETTUCE (95 percent water) Top off a pile of lettuce with plenty of vegetables for a satisfying — and healthy — water-rich salad.

TOMATO (93 percent water) The tomato's versatility is almost endless, and, with an abundance of the antioxidant lycopene, the health benefits are too.

APPLE (84 percent water) An apple a day keeps Alzheimer's, asthma and high cholesterol away.

GRAPEFRUIT (91 percent water) The antioxidants in grapefruits are so powerful that they have significantly reduced cholesterol levels in people who are unresponsive to cholesterol-lowering medication.

SPINACH (92 percent water) Spinach promotes good eyesight, prevents heart attacks and, as Popeye proved, strengthens muscles.

POTATO (80 percent water) Deep-fried variations aside, potatoes contain a high volume of skin and heart-healthy vitamins and minerals.

CUCUMBER (96 percent water) The silica and water in cucumbers help improve your complexion for healthy, radiant skin.

MUSHROOM (92 percent water) Stock up on these for the dreary winters; mushrooms are the only vegetable that contains vitamin D, the nutrient we soak up from sunshine. n