



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > [The Zone Diet](#)

The Zone Diet ^[1]

Dear Alice,

There is a diet going around called the "Zone Diet." This diet seems to make a lot of sense. I would greatly appreciate your opinion on it.

Sincerely,
Zone Me In

Answer

Dear Zone Me In,

Looks like you're trying to "zone" in on your eating habits. The Zone Diet was created as a way to help people curb their consumption of refined carbohydrates (referred to as carbs by many food enthusiasts) and sugary foods as a way to lose weight. This particular diet recommends eating a lower amount of carbs, higher amount of protein, moderate amount of fat, and cutting out most sugar. While this strategy may be popular for weight loss, studies have shown that, for many, the most effective way to lose weight is simply to take in fewer calories than you burn, which most diets, including the Zone Diet, inspire with their food rules. Additionally, while you may find that you lose weight from a particular diet, maintaining a specific diet may be more challenging than making overall changes to your eating habits. All this to say, the Zone Diet may help people lose weight but doesn't necessarily offer any advantages over other eating plans.

The Zone Diet is grounded in the belief that eating a lower carb, higher protein, and moderate fat diet, in the ratio of 40 percent carbs, 30 percent protein, 30 percent fat, is the ultimate way to balance these substances within the body. While that ratio may work for some people, the plan is also based on a lower calorie intake — calories are capped at 1200 a day for women and 1500 a day for men. Some people may find that this is too few calories to sustain their daily needs. The guidelines generally follow those of the [Mediterranean diet](#) ^[2], but specify exactly which protein and carb choices are "best."

While the Zone Diet may work for some, any plan that limits the intake of processed foods and sugar, usually through calorie restriction, has shown to help people lose weight. For example, there was a study done with overweight and obese women who were instructed to follow one of

four diets, including the Zone Diet, and all of the women lost at least some weight and kept much of it off at the one-year follow up. The other three diets in the study were: 1) low carb, 2) low fat, and 3) low saturated fat with moderate carbs. The results showed that the participants following the low carb diet had the most success. It's also worth noting that there isn't much scientific evidence supporting the ratios outlined by the Zone Diet are more conducive for weight loss.

Of course no two people have the same eating patterns, hormonal profiles, and genetics, so the same weight loss plan doesn't work in the same way for each body. Weight control is much more complex than simply following a prescribed eating plan or a meticulous balance of nutrients. The satisfaction a person derives from their food is key in forming a healthful, happy, and long-term eating plan. For some people, slightly higher carbohydrate intake is more satisfying; for others, a slightly higher protein works better. The most common [basic health and nutrition advice](#) [3] is to eat a variety of whole, unprocessed foods, engage in regular physical activity, and make these changes enjoyable, sustainable, and permanent.

Zone Me In, what was it about this diet that drew you to it? Are you looking to lose weight? Or are you trying to find a more structured way of eating? The best approach to nutrition is one that allows you to enjoy the pleasure of eating a variety of foods while feeling healthy, fed, and fit, and this looks different for everyone. If you try the Zone Diet and you get that feeling, then you may have found a pattern of eating that works for you. If you don't get that feeling, you may not have found the right fit yet. For more information about this and other lifestyle changes, you may also consider speaking with a health care provider or registered dietitian. You could also learn more from the [Go Ask Alice! Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) [4] archives to learn more about nutrition generally.

Here's to a healthy relationship with food!

Alice!

Category:

[Nutrition & Physical Activity](#) [4]

[Food Choices & Health](#) [5]

[Optimal Nutrition](#) [6]

[Food for Thought](#) [7]

[Healthy Eating](#) [8]

[Weight Gain & Loss](#) [9]

Related questions

[Confused about calories and fat grams!](#) [10]

[Confused about carbs: What's a good carbohydrate choice?](#) [11]

[Good vs. bad fats](#) [12]

[What's a healthy weight?](#) [13]

Resources

[Columbia Health Nutrition Services \(Morningside\)](#) [14]

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [15]

Student Health Service Nutrition Services (CUIMC) [16]

Medical Services (CUIMC) [17]

Published date:

May 24, 1996

Last reviewed on:

Feb 15, 2019

Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
 - Content Use
 - Media Inquiries
 - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
 - Licensing Q&As
 - Get Alice! on Your Website
 - Full Site Syndication
 - Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/zone-diet-0>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/zone-diet-0>
- [2] <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801>
- [3] <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/nutrition-physical-activity>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/food-choices-health>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/optimal-nutrition>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/food-thought>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/healthy-eating>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/weight-gain-loss>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/confused-about-calories-and-fat-grams>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/confused-about-carbs-whats-good-carbohydrate-choice-0>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/good-vs-bad-fats-0>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/whats-healthy-weight-0>
- [14] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/columbia-health-nutrition-services-morningside>
- [15] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [16] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/student-health-service-nutrition-services-cuimc>
- [17] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>