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## Dieting decoded

Four health junkies give you the low-down on their tried-and-tested meal routines. Wondering which is best for you? South Beach, Ayurvedic, Macrobiotic or Vegan. Following these diet plans can help a lot in keeping oneself healthy and fit.

### Diet 1

#### South Beach

Sushmita Nair, had already tried her hand at the GM diet, which advocates eating only one kind of food all day. But when she noticed herself getting irritable and hungry in just two days of starting the diet, she gave it up. Then her mother put the whole family on to the South Beach diet. "You basically cut all the carbs out of your diet for about two weeks, during which you fill your meal with proteins instead," she says. Nair had to give up on rotis, pasta and junk food, but after the first three days, she found herself liking it. The diet plan essentially looks at complex foods which require more calories to break down, hence aiding in weight loss.

"You get to eat chicken and other kinds of meats, as long as they are not fried. You can eat any vegetables and fruits except bananas and potatoes because they are heavy in carbs," she adds. After cutting out carbs completely in the first week, you slowly start adding one portion per day in the second week, to rebalance your diet. "Be careful not to go back to stuffing yourself after the second week, or you'll put all that weight back on," Nair warns.

The best part of the diet is that it is relatively short, so cravings are kept to a minimum. She says, "It was only the first three days that I experienced cravings, but after that I started enjoying myself. I didn't have any mood swings and in fact, noticed that my face didn't bloat anymore because I wasn't eating any carbs."



### Diet 2

#### Ayurvedic

Anshu Prasad turned to the ayurvedic diet about six months ago to cure her alopecia. She was told that she had a 'pith' imbalance, and needed to eat foods that had a cooling effect on the body. "It doesn't mean eating foods that are refrigerated," she laughs, adding, "I was asked to eat plenty of fruits that have high water content like watermelons and pomegranates, and vegetables like cucumbers. Black raisins are also good for me."

The diet explained to her was very simple, and included foods like soya beans and white oats. "I couldn't eat fermented foods either, so though I really liked eating *dosas*, *idlis* and *dhoklas*, I couldn't touch them," she sighs. Prasad admits this is the hardest diet she has ever tried, because of the level of will power and self-discipline she needed to cultivate to stick with it. "I love mangoes, but I can't eat them because they raise the body's heat," she says, adding, "I also have to avoid curd because it is acidic. I find it hard to stick to the diet even today, but my hair problem is almost cured and I'm calmer and more energetic."



Prasad's family supports her by cooking food separately, that's less spicy and doesn't contain any of the forbidden foods. "You have to change your style of cooking," she warns.

### Diet 3

#### Macrobiotic

When her father was diagnosed with cancer in 1998, Shonali Sabherwal decided to turn to a macrobiotic lifestyle, which was being regarded as a cancer curing diet. "The diet focuses on cleansing your blood condition," she reveals, adding, "It works wonders for those recuperating from diseases and for weight loss."

The diet breaks down your daily food intake into 40-50 per cent whole grain foods, 25-30 per cent vegetables, five-10 per cent fruit, 10-15 per cent of legumes and fish and five-10 percent of soup. It also includes fermented food items like miso soup or quick pickles which aid in digestion. "Indian food lacks enzyme-rich food, except for dahi," Sabherwal says, adding, "We also completely knock out sugars, white flour and all meats except for fish. Nothing that comes out of a box can be eaten, so there's no trans-fat either."

She explains that dairy products can't be completely assimilated, leading to accumulation in the body. "I dropped seven kilos and my hair and skin improved with the body balancing itself." She insists that the diet can be age-defying because of the blood-cleansing properties. "I found myself calming down, though I had been a very angry child. The food you eat impacts your personality."

### Diet 4

#### Vegan

Monica Mehta, who turned vegan about a year ago, researched her new lifestyle choice extensively before adopting it. "I didn't have any health problems, but after reading up on it for about a month, I realised that I would get rid of those excess aches and pains," she says, adding, "Before I turned vegan, I was anemic, but within a month, my iron levels were corrected, I also lost about five kilos, including a belly." She adds, "I also lost about five kilos, including a belly."

Mehta admits the biggest challenges were getting friends and family to accept her choice. “But now they’re very cordial,” she says, mentioning that even at parties, they take pains to make food for her without butter or cheese. “It’s not about giving up on something you like entirely, just finding a replacement for it.”

Mehta says: “Instead of cow’s milk, which tends to smell, I drink almond or soya milk that is just as healthy without the odour. My new diet has definitely made me less stressed-out, a change I’ve noticed in other vegans as well.” Another downside is dealing with people who tend to view vegans as a cult. “It’s not,” she laughs, adding, “We just tend to connect to each other because we share the same philosophy.”

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