

The best diets, according to U.S. News and World Report

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By Nancy Szokan. Published: January 6

Nutrition

The best way to lose weight is . . .

U.S. News & World Report's 'Best Diets 2014'



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Common sense takes first prize in the annual rating of popular diets that U.S. News & World Report is publishing online Tuesday. Established, balanced plans came out ahead of gimmicky insta-lose programs.

The overall winner was the [DASH diet](#), which, as its full name — Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension — suggests, is designed to lower a person's blood pressure. But the diet, it turns out, had the highest rating on a five-point scale measuring short- and long-term weight loss, ease of compliance, safety and nutrition. Here's the basic idea of DASH, as described by a panel of experts: "Emphasize the foods you've always been told to eat (fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy), while shunning those we've grown to love (calorie- and fat-laden sweets and red meat). Top it all off by cutting back on salt, and voilà!"

Second-best overall was the low-fat [TLC Diet](#). Tied for third place were the well-known Weight Watchers program and the [Mediterranean diet](#), which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, olive oil and fish.

Tied for last place were two high-protein diets — the Paleo "cave-man" diet, which was the most Google-searched plan of the year, and the Dukan, named for its founder, a French physician. health.usnews.com/best-diet

Indoor fitness

A mean punch and a friendly face

Power Boxing Workout with Marlen Esparza

[Marlen Esparza](#) has a sweet smile and an upbeat, musical voice. This is great for a DVD personality — and pleasantly surprising for a very tough boxer. Esparza has won seven consecutive U.S. National Championships and took the bronze medal in women's boxing at the 2012 Olympics.

Her new workout DVD is simple, low-key and cheerful. An opening tutorial gives you the basics, including a little bit of lingo: "orthodox stance" is left foot back, right foot forward; "southpaw" is the reverse. You jab from the front, making sure your front foot and your front hand move at the same time. The cross comes from the back, the "power hand." When the action speeds up, it's called "live," to rhyme with "jive."

Then, in a setting that looks like an old-school gym — dingy brick wall, dim lighting, fashion-free clothes — Esparza and two backup boxers offer an easy-to-follow workout. A warm-up includes jabs, floor work and a lot of lunges "because if you have no legs, you have no fight." Next comes a series of boxing moves: A typical sequence goes something like "Live! Jab, jab-cross, jab cross lead-body, lead-body, power-body, power-body, escape!" Finally, you "shake it out," bouncing on your toes, checking how every part of your body feels.

It's all delivered at a novice-friendly pace, with lots of repetition — and an "empowering" mood that's more yoga than "Rocky."