Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: Many people choose to follow a diet plan to lose weight and eat healthier. But with so many diet plans available, from the DASH diet to the Keto diet to the Mediterranean diet and more, it can be a challenge to find one that’s effective and sustainable in the long term. I’m Emily Yeap.

Joining me today to offer some insights about diet plans, including some of the better ones to follow, is registered dietitian Natalie Allen. She’s also a clinical assistant professor of biomedical sciences at Missouri State University.

Natalie Allen: There are lots of diet plans out there because there are lots of people who need to lose weight. Unfortunately, obesity is a pretty complex issue and what works for one person doesn’t necessarily work for another as far as nutrition and diet. So, there are lots of good choices; however, we need to look at where we are getting our nutrition information on the diet. Has it been studied? Has this been proven to work? Will this work for you? One reason we see so many diets is, they don’t work. So, people start them, they try it, it’s too hard, they’re not able to maintain the weight loss, it’s not good for their body, it takes so much time, then that fizzles out. Then, we try another thing.

Emily Yeap: When you’re evaluating a diet plan, consider these things.

Natalie Allen: Number one, is it sustainable? Is this something you could do for several months? Number two, can your family eat this way with you? If you’re having to make a lot of special food or buy special food, that’s not as sustainable. Number three, look at the cost. If it is requiring a lot of special food and special supplements, that’s probably not necessary. Four, does it have exercise included? If there is no exercise, it’s going to be hard to lose weight. Now you may be able to lose to a certain point, but then after that point you’re going to have to start exercising, most likely. And then number five, has this been proven? Has this been around for a while and do we know it works for people?

Emily Yeap: What are some diet plans that have consistently proven to be effective over time, with regard to managing weight and improving health?

Natalie Allen: The first one is the DASH diet and that’s Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. You don’t have to have high blood pressure to follow this diet. It’s just good for everybody. It incorporates a lot of fruits and vegetables, a lot of lean protein, it has a lot of good mineral and electrolyte and vitamin included. And, it’s something you can find on the internet and it has different calorie levels available. So, that’s one that we know works. We know it will lower your blood pressure. It generally is very heart healthy as well.

The other diet that has been around for a very long time, that we know is effective is the Mediterranean diet. The Mediterranean diet is high in healthy fats. It also has more plant-based products like legumes and tofu and things like that. But it tastes really good and a lot of people like the Mediterranean options. We know that it improves cardiovascular health. We know that it lowers your risk for certain types of cancers. So, it has been proven and effective. Both the diets require a little bit more prep and maybe a few more trips to the grocery store, but they’re very much something as a dietitian I would recommend.

Now from a commercial diet standpoint, the one that has been shown to be most effective is Weight Watchers. One reason Weight Watchers is very effective is, you eat normal food and you can fit in different foods. And that’s very normal thing that you would want a piece of birthday cake on your birthday or on Thanksgiving you should be able to eat what you want. Weight Watchers does a really nice job of teaching people how to do that. They also offer support groups, which have been shown to be very helpful for a lot of people. You can exchange ideas, recipes, you can get people back on track, that might be a group that you would exercise with. Weight Watchers is a great commercial plan that has been around a long time and has been proven to be effective.

Emily Yeap: Allen highlights the National Weight Control Registry, which looks at what within diets do most people do when they’re successful at losing weight.

Natalie Allen: Number one, they eat breakfast. You do want to eat something in the morning. Number two, they only weigh once a week. Weighing every day is not very effective nor necessary. Number three, like 95% of them exercise at least an hour a day. They also have less screen time each day, so meaning they don’t sit as often. And then about 90% had to change their diet in some way. So, when you combine those things, look at the plan you’re considering. Does it have breakfast? Does it have activity? Do I need to modify my food intake, but it’s a reasonable something I can do? We know those things work.

Emily Yeap: That was registered dietitian Natalie Allen. I’m Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the office of University Communications at (417) 836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at KSMU.org.