

# Americans turning to trendy diets to shed pandemic pounds

December 20 2021, by Dennis Thompson

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(HealthDay)—Americans in the prime of their lives are worried about

the pounds they packed on during the pandemic and plan to do something about it in the new year, a new Harris Poll/*HealthDay* survey finds.

Nearly 2 of every 3 U.S. adults (63%) plan to change up their [diet](#) in 2022, either by eating less or cutting back on specific foods, [poll results](#) reveal.

Adults between the ages of 18 and 44 are the most worried about the health effects of their [pandemic weight gain](#), according to [poll](#) results.

Folks in that age range are more likely to say they're struggling with diet and [weight management](#). They're also more worried that the hit their health took during the [pandemic](#) will affect them in years to come.

"These younger adults are more likely to be employed, and they're also more likely to be parents of children under 18. That probably means these folks are more likely to have been stressed during the pandemic," said Harris Poll Vice President Kathy Steinberg.

"If you're an adult who's 55-plus or 65-plus, yes, it sucks that you haven't been able to visit family and you've been quarantined, but maybe your life hasn't changed that much in terms of what you're doing," Steinberg continued. "Whereas if you're a parent and you used to send your kids to school and you used to commute to work, your whole life has changed."

Overall, more than 2 in 5 adults (43%) said they gained [weight](#) during the pandemic.

Of those, 7 in 10 (71%) are concerned about the weight they gained, including 1 in 4 (26%) who strongly agree.

A deeper dive into the poll numbers support Steinberg's contention that

the busier lives of younger adults make them more likely to be stressed about the health effects of the pandemic.

## **Stressors have parents worried about health**

Employed folks were more likely to say the pandemic has made it more difficult to manage their weight (46% vs. 38% for unemployed) and that the negative health effects of the pandemic will affect them for years to come (49% vs. 42%).

Parents of kids under 18 had even stronger worries about how the pandemic had harmed their weight and their health, compared to adults without children that age. They were more likely to:

- Worry about suffering long-term negative health impacts from the pandemic (55% vs. 41%)
- Say the pandemic has made it more difficult to manage their weight (53% vs. 37%).
- Fret that they'll ever be able to lose the weight they gained during the pandemic (48% vs. 34%).
- Struggle more now sticking to a diet than they did prior to the pandemic (46% vs. 33%)

"They have busier lives. They have more going on in their lives with employment and kids, and so they've just had a lot more to manage during the pandemic," Steinberg explained. "When you're trying to manage child care and working from home, personal [health](#) and weight may be the thing that kind of falls to the back burner."

[Calorie counting](#) is the most popular diet trend among people who plan to watch what they eat in 2022, the poll found.

Nearly 20% of all adults plan to count calories in the new year, including

29% of people who tried to diet during the pandemic and 32% of those who plan to do something about their weight in 2022.

## Fasting takes off

About 16% of people plan to try intermittent fasting, according to the poll. With intermittent fasting, you're only allowed to eat during a specific window of time each day, or you must stick to a restricted amount of calories on certain days of the week.

"The most common one we tend to see is the 16-hour window of fasting that leaves an eight-hour window of eating," said Caroline Susie, a Dallas-based registered dietitian and national spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

[Intermittent fasting](#) has been around for centuries, and is even part of some long-standing religious practices, Susie said in an interview with *HealthDay Now*.

This eating pattern is now having its "15 minutes of fame," Susie said, possibly because it's easier for people to adopt than diets that require you to cut out carbs, fats or specific types of foods.

"What's nice is it doesn't tell you what to eat. It tells you when to eat," Susie said. "If you're somebody who isn't a big fan of lists or what's on my plan or not on my plan, this could be an option for you."

Some poll respondents do plan to try a more restrictive diet, however. About 16% plan to try a low-fat diet in 2022, and 15% a low-carb diet.

Those sorts of weight-loss diets are much harder to stick with than an eating pattern like [intermittent fasting](#), said Dr. Lawrence Cheskin, chair of nutrition and food studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

"If you have to 100% of the time adhere to a very strict dietary plan, we all know most people are not going to do that for long and they're not going to enjoy it," Cheskin told *HealthDay Now*.

**More information:** The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has more about [fad diets](#).

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Citation: Americans turning to trendy diets to shed pandemic pounds (2021, December 20) retrieved 12 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-americans-trendy-diets-pandemic-pounds.html>

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