

Fad Diets: What You May Be Missing

How can you spot a fad diet?

Weight-loss advice comes in literally hundreds of disguises. Most often the “new” and “revolutionary” diets are really old fad diets making an encore appearance. Examples of fad diets include those that

- tout or ban a specific food or food group,
- suggest that food can change body chemistry, or
- blame specific hormones for weight problems.

Food-specific diets rely on the myth that some foods have special properties that can cause weight loss or gain. But no food can. These diets don't teach healthful eating habits; therefore, you won't stick with them. Sooner or later, you'll have a taste for something else -- anything that is not among the foods you've been “allowed” on the diet.

The popular high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are based on the idea that carbohydrates are bad, that many people are “allergic” to them or are insulin-resistant, and therefore gain weight when they eat them. The truth is that people are eating more total calories and getting less physical activity, and that is the real reason they are gaining weight. These high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets tend to be low in calcium and fiber, as well as healthy phytochemicals (plant chemicals). Some authors of these fad diets advise taking vitamin-mineral supplements to replace lost nutrients. However, supplements should “bridge the gap” in healthy eating and not be used as a replacement for nutrient-rich foods.

Also, the authors of high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets advocate taking advantage of ketosis to accelerate weight loss. Ketosis is an abnormal body process that occurs during starvation due to lack of carbohydrate. Ketosis can cause fatigue, constipation, nausea, and vomiting. Potential long-term side effects of ketosis include heart disease, bone loss, and kidney damage.

Healthy lifestyle tips for losing weight and keeping it off

Successful weight loss (losing weight and keeping it off for at least five years) is accomplished by making positive changes to both eating habits and physical activity patterns.

Ten Red Flags That Signal Bad Nutrition Advice

1. Recommendations that promise a quick fix
2. Dire warnings of dangers from a single product or regimen
3. Claims that sound too good to be true
4. Simplistic conclusions drawn from a complex study
5. Recommendations based on a single study
6. Dramatic statements that are refuted by reputable scientific organizations
7. Lists of “good” and “bad” foods
8. Recommendations made to help sell a product
9. Recommendations based on studies published without peer review
10. Recommendations from studies that ignore differences among individuals or groups

Get moving!

To establish a habit of regular physical activity, make simple, small changes. Try getting 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Try a variety of different activities to ward off boredom.

- Instead of meeting a friend for lunch, meet for a walk.
- Wash your car by hand instead of using the car wash.
- Use manual gardening tools to mow, trim, and rake.

Eat a wide variety of foods

Variety is the spice of life! Eating a variety of foods helps provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals, all of which may help reduce chronic disease risk. You don't need to give up favorite foods when trying to maintain or lose weight.

Tailor portion sizes

An important part of healthful eating is monitoring portion sizes. This can be especially challenging when eating in restaurants. When eating out, divide the meal and take half home for the next day, split a meal with a friend, or order an appetizer as your main course.

Enjoy the following delicious and hearty stew with a slice of whole-grain bread after a brisk walk:

Heartwarming Vegetable Stew

Preparation time: 20 minutes Cook time: 35 minutes Makes 6 (2-cup) servings

3-1/4 cups chicken broth, divided
2 medium onions, coarsely chopped (about 2 cups)
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1-1/3 pounds (4 medium) potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices
2 cans (14-1/4 ounces each) hominy, drained
2 cups broccoli florets
2 medium carrots, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices
1 cup peeled, cubed (3/4-inch) butternut or other winter squash
1 jar (7-1/4 ounces) roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained
2 teaspoons dried basil leaves, crushed
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves, crushed
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon pepper

In Dutch oven or large saucepan, heat 1/4 cup of the broth over medium heat until hot. Add onions and garlic; cook and stir 4 to 6 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add remaining broth and all remaining ingredients; bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 20 to 25 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.

Nutrition Information per Serving: 330 calories; 5 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 410 milligrams sodium; 66 grams carbohydrate; 10 grams fiber; 9 grams protein

Tip: *Three cups frozen broccoli-carrot mixture may be substituted for fresh broccoli and carrots, if desired; proceed as recipe directs.*

For more information

- Contact your local **Health and Wellness Center or Dietitian.**
 - **The American Dietetic Association/National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics.** ADA's Consumer Nutrition Information Line (800/366-1655) provides recorded messages with timely, practical nutrition information as well as [referrals to registered dietitians](#). Messages are available 24 hours daily with new topics each month.
 - For more potato nutrition information and great recipe ideas, check out: www.potatohelp.com
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