

# Debunking Diet Myths

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2006

# What is a fad?

- Webster's defines a fad as "a short-lived fashion or craze"
- So fad diets are short-lived, crazy diets!
- These diets do not work for many reasons – one reason being they are **SHORT-LIVED**

# Object

- Debunk popular diet myths
- Give you the knowledge to choose a healthy pattern of eating and exercising to avoid “dieting” for a lifetime
- No the dangers of fad diets
- Evaluate a weight loss program for safety and efficacy

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **High Protein/ Low Carbohydrate Diets –**
  - Low in calories and exclude grains and other important high-carbohydrate foods
    - Important nutrients and fiber are being limited in the diet
    - Higher in protein than recommended = stress and injury to the kidneys
    - Some are also high in fat which can raise the risk of developing heart disease
  - Latest version is “Enter the Zone”
  - There are now “Zone restaurants” in New York and Los Angeles
  - Majority of weight loss is muscle and water loss, so weight will be regained as soon as normal eating resumes

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **Elimination Diets –**
  - Demonize one or more foods or food groups
- **“Sugarbusters!” – calls for elimination of sugar in the diet**
  - This includes carrots and beets since they are naturally high in sugar
  - Very low in calories/ high in fat – people do see temporary weight loss

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **Single Food Diets –**
  - Examples: the grapefruit diet, the rice diet, the cabbage soup diet
- Variety of foods not being eaten so nutrients are missing from the diet
- Usually low in calories

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **Blood Type Diets –**
  - Eat foods based on your blood type
  - Thinking is that by eating certain foods, the body will process them more efficiently because they are for your blood type
- Processing food more or less efficiently does not result in weight loss
- Again, it eliminates foods, therefore; one would be missing important nutrients

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **Liquid Diets –**
  - Simply drink just liquids
- It is possible to consume just as many calories through liquid as through food
  - May be easier to consume more because food contains more fiber that can help you feel full
- Some may replace one or two meals with liquids, such as “Slim Fast” or “Optifast”
- Most provide few calories per day
- Claim to provide everything in a drink but they are missing nutrients and phytochemicals that can only be found in food



# Examples of Fad Diets:

## ■ **Skipping Meals-**

- It is a myth that skipping meals will result in weight loss
- Going several hours without eating will more than likely cause one to overeat when they have their next meal
- It is healthier for the body and appetite to eat regular meals when hunger strikes instead of skipping

# Examples of Fad Diets:

- **Fasting or Near Fasting –**
  - Also called “crash dieting”
- Lacking in nutrients required for normal functioning of the body
- Weight loss is a result of water and muscle loss
- Side effects include: extreme fatigue, constipation, nausea, diarrhea, and even gallstone formation

# Examples of Fad Diets:

## ■ Detox Plans-

- Several diets claim the body is full of toxins which are stored in body fat and need to be cleansed regularly to avoid illness
- Plans include fasting, liquid dieting and/or use of herbal teas
- No scientific basis that supports this type of plan
- Substances store in mobilized body fat would reenter the bloodstream and be recirculated through the liver and throughout the body and would not necessarily be excreted or “flushed out”

# Examples of Fad Products

- **Laxatives –**
  - Induces bowel movements
- Myth that taking laxatives promotes weight loss
  - Laxative-induced diarrhea does not significantly reduce the number of calories absorbed from the food you have eaten
- Laxatives do not work on the small intestine – where calories are absorbed, but on the colon
- Use can promote cramping, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, dehydration, fainting, irregular heartbeat and electrolyte imbalances

# Examples of Fad Products

- **Teas –**
  - Several teas on the market: dieter's tea, slim teas, fat-burning teas
    - Likely contain a form of a laxative but it may not be listed on the label
- If the tea contains: senna, aloe, rhubarb root, buckthorn, cascara, or castor oil – it contains a laxative
- Use can promote cramping, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, dehydration, fainting, irregular heartbeat and electrolyte imbalances

# Examples of Fad Products

- **Herbs, Hormones, Minerals-**
  - Ma Huang, DHEA (dehydroepian-drosterone), and individual minerals like chromium are all marketed as weight loss aids
- None have been proven to promote weight loss, build muscle, or anything beneficial
- Ma Huang and DHEA have been found dangerous and deaths have been linked to Ma Huang

# Examples of Fad Products

- **Drugs-**
  - Dexatrim, prescription drugs like Phen/Fen
- Not been proven effective in long-term weight control
- In some cases, medication is appropriate as part of a doctor prescribed plan
- **Other Gimmicks-**
  - Cellulite creams, fat-burning sweat suits, vacuum pants (claim to suck the fat out of your body while you are hooked up to a vacuum cleaner)
  - Slimmer shorts claim to melt unwanted fat away from hips, stomach, buttocks, and thighs
  - Products that promise spot reduction like the “abdominizer” and “Thigh Master” and harder to spot, but still gimmicks

# Identify a Fad Diet or Product

- **Promise quick weight loss**
- **Flaunt famous names**
- **Limit foods to eat**
- **Use testimony instead of science**
- **No sweat**
- **Sell something – like food or pills**
- **Have “secret Ingredients”**
- **Short-term**
- **Disbelieve doctors**



# Assessing a Program

- Partnership for Healthy Weight Management
  - Includes 41 organizations and individuals including representatives from gov't agencies, scientific orgs, universities, industry groups, and public advocacy orgs.
  - Encourages companies to give customers information they need to evaluate a weight loss program

# How to Assess a Program

- Before signing up or paying money find out the following information:
  - Qualifications of the staff
  - Risks associated with being overweight or obese
  - Risks associated with the company's program
  - Cost of program
  - Advice about difficulty of maintaining weight loss and increasing chances of success
- Ask any program if they have adopted the "Partnership for Healthy Weight" guidelines

# Potential Health Problems

- **Loss of energy** – almost all fad diets call for less calories to promote quick weight loss
  - When this happens, body tries to conserve energy by burning fewer calories, making you feel tired
- **Dehydration-** electrolytes sodium and potassium are dissolved in body water
  - When one is dehydrated, an imbalance of electrolytes occurs causing constipation, slowness of thought, labored breathing, dim vision, and can result in death
  - Electrolytes conduct nerve transmissions and muscle contractions, including heart rhythm – an imbalance can cause cardiac arrest

# Potential Health Problems

- **Loss of muscle** – when the body does not have adequate CHO intake it is forced to perform gluconeogenesis (glucose formation) for energy
  - Source of this glucose is mostly protein, or muscle tissue
  - More muscle you have – the higher your metabolic rate
  - By losing muscle- metabolic rate is slowed
  - Muscle holds water so weight loss will actually be occurring
  - However, person is not losing fat and weight gain will occur when old habits return

# Potential Health Problems

- **Vitamin & Mineral Deficiencies –**
  - Iron deficiency is prevalent among young women of childbearing age and causes one to feel fatigue, listness, cold, and unable to concentrate.
  - Majority of teens do not meet recommended calcium intake and deficiency can lead to sub-optimal bone formation and osteoporosis later in life.

# Other Problems

- **False Hope** – fad diets make promises they can't keep by offering “magic bullets”
- **Feeling of failure** – when the diet doesn't work or the dieter eats a forbidden food, he/she may feel failure or guilt
- **Loss of Money**- many products are expensive
- **Avoiding Real Change** – by trying fad diets, person who really wants or needs to lose weight is avoiding making the changes that will promote real weight loss for good

# Sensible Weight Control Guidelines

- **Do you really need to lose weight?**
  - Recent study showed that more than 33% of high school girls considered themselves overweight compared to 15% of the boys
  - More than 43% of the girls reported they were on a diet
- **Lose the quick-fix mentality**
  - Losing weight is a lifetime commitment, not meal-long, day-long, or even month-long
  - **THERE ARE NO QUICK FIXES!**

# Sensible Weight Control Guidelines

## ■ **A healthy Diet –**

- Use the word diet as a noun not a verb
  - A healthy diet is what you eat; you no longer “diet” to lose weight
  - A healthy diet follows the MyPyramid format

## ■ **Honor your hunger**

- If your stomach is growling – feed it!
- If you wait too long, you will probably overeat
- Stop eating when you feel like you have had enough – forget the clean your plate mentality



# Sensible Weight Control Guidelines

- **Forget perfection –**
  - Accepting our bodies and loving them is enough to want to care of them and give them all the healthy fuel and exercise they need to stay healthy
- **Don't deny yourself –**
  - Don't make certain foods “illegal”
  - Just make sure it is once in a while, and the rest of your diet is low-fat
  - Remember it is the overall diet you eat week to week, month to month that makes up the cells in your body, not one dessert

# Sensible Weight Control Guidelines

- **Get sweaty –**
  - Try to do something active everyday
  - Don't focus on a certain number of minutes, just become a more active person
- **Monitor how you feel –**
  - Using the scale to determine whether you are at a healthy weight can be deceiving
  - Monitor how you feel, do you have energy when you are done, do you sleep well, do you feel fit and strong?

# Comparing Diet Products and Programs

- What is your product?
- What are some of the promises made?
- What do the pictures look like? Any celebrities?
- Price?

# Comparing Diet Products and Programs

- Based on promises made:
  - Is weight loss difficult?
  - Does it take a long time?
  - Is physical activity a part of weight loss?
  - In your opinion, is package truthful?

# Questions?



# Reference

- “Debunking Diet Myths” by Catherine Macpherson, MS, RD; Learning Zone Express