

fad diets



One of the biggest hurdles to healthy eating are 'fad' diets; eating plans that promise fast, amazing weight loss results that may ask the dieter to completely focus on one food item or action. A few popular diets are the Dr. Atkins, South Beach, Hollywood, Cabbage Soup or Grapefruit Diets.

Fad diets take form in many ways: they may be low-fat, low-carbohydrates, high-protein, or focusing on one particular food item such as grapefruit. These diets lack major nutrients such as dietary fiber, calcium or carbohydrates, as well as selected vitamins, minerals, and protective phytochemicals, such as antioxidants (substances found in vegetables, which are protective against disease). Over the long term, by not receiving the proper amounts of these nutrients, you may develop serious health problems later in life.

For the food groups that these diets do permit, the proportions are either well above or well below those recommended by major health organizations. Some common claims of these diets include blaming particular hormones for weight gain, suggesting that food can change body chemistry, or touting or banning a particular food. However, they all have one thing in common: they offer only a temporary solution to what for many people is a lifelong and chronic condition. Once the diet is stopped, the lost weight is usually regained quickly, and when weight is lost rapidly, chances are it is not fat that is lost but water weight and precious muscle – but when it is regained, it is usually all gained as fat. This is because none of these diets teach you how to eat right.

Quick weight loss diets usually overemphasize one particular food or type of food. They violate the first principle of good nutrition: eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of foods. If you are able to stay on such a diet for more than a few weeks, you may develop nutritional deficiencies, because no one type of food has all the nutrients you need for good health. Some of these diets are so monotonous and boring that it's almost impossible to stay on them for long periods of time.

HIGH PROTEIN/FAT, LOW CARBOHYDRATE

Low carb diets, such as Atkins or South Beach emphasize foods high in protein and fat and state that we need to stay away from carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables, grains and breads. The thought behind this is that the absence of carbohydrates forces the body to burn existing fat as energy.

There is quick initial weight loss due to the breakdown of glycogen, which releases a TON of water. Also, fats and protein digest slower, making you feel full longer. Thus you may be consuming less overall calories. But these diets are hard to maintain and we NEED carbs for energy and to fuel the processes of the body, so don't be fooled here. Carbs should be about 50% of your daily diet.

HIGH FIBER/LOW FAT/LOW CALORIE

High fiber diets, like the Cabbage Soup Diet, are based on the need to quickly reduce weight.

CONCLUSION

There is no quick and easy way to lose weight. Calories in must be less than energy expended. When you eat a little less than the body needs, you will lose weight. So evaluate what you are eating and what small changes can you make. A salad instead of French fries or one less soda? Walking instead of driving? These small changes can help to make a long lasting difference.

*American Heart Association. 2008
WebMD 2008
Epicurean Group 2010*