



The Truth About... Fad Diets



A survey conducted by the British Dietetic Association in 2004 found that a third of people quizzed ended up heavier than their original weight only weeks after dieting.

Does this sound familiar?

Part of the reason for this may be the current popularity of fad diets - the kind of regimens where you eat a very restrictive diet or an unusual combination of foods for a short period of time, lose weight quickly, but then get fed up, start eating all the wrong foods and pile the pounds back on. To help you out of this cycle we've come up with some tips to help guide you through the maze of dietary information that surrounds us.

How to spot bad dietary advice

Stay away from diets that:

- Promise a quick fix
- Recommend magical fat-burning effects of foods (eg grapefruit)
- Promote the avoidance or severe limitation of a whole food group, such as carbohydrate foods or dairy foods (and suggest large doses of vitamin and mineral supplements as a replacement)
- Promote eating mainly one type of food (eg cabbage soup or eggs)
- Suggest easy, rapid weight loss (more than 2lbs a week)
- Recommend eating foods only in particular combinations
- Make claims that sound 'too good to be true'
- Focus only on your appearance rather than on health benefits

Who knows what?

Don't be fooled by the fact that many beautiful celebrities are following some of these weird and bizarre regimens. They are blessed with 'beauty' genes, and usually have armies of trainers, chefs and stylists rather than nutrition qualifications. You should also be wary of unqualified practitioners who may be offering unproven techniques for diagnosis and treatment of nutritional problems. Be very sceptical of the following:

- Iridology
- Kinesiology
- Craniosacral therapy
- Hair mineral analysis

- Face reading
- Tongue reading
- Colonic irrigation
- Magnetic therapy

Seek the advice of your doctor or a dietitian. Dietitians have recognised qualifications and will be able to give you safe, unbiased, evidence-based advice.

Basic Guidelines

So what's the best advice for getting rid of the extra pounds and keeping them off? You need to think about not only the food you eat but also your lifestyle and the amount of activity you do.

You also need to think carefully about ways of changing your behaviour and developing new healthier habits if you are to lose weight and keep it off in the longer term.

Here are a few ideas to get you going:

- Keep a diary and stay more aware of habits and problem areas
- Choose lower fat foods, eg lean meat and lower fat dairy products
- Watch those portion sizes!
- Fill up on vegetables and fruit as snacks, with meals and for desserts.
- Have regular meals, starting with breakfast
- Get active, aim for at least 30 minutes daily of moderate activity. If you can manage more than that even better - ideally aim to build up to 60 minutes a day!
- Be realistic about weight loss; aim to lose 1-2lbs (0.5-1kg) a week

Get Weight Wise

And why not check out either of our fantastic interactive websites at: www.bdaweightwise.com and www.teenweightwise.com which are packed full of information, practical advice and support for anyone who is managing their weight.

Designed by dietitians and funded with a grant from the Department of Health, all the information is independent, scientifically sound, and trustworthy!

And what's more - it's all free!

By Amanda Johnson, Dietitian

This Food Fact sheet is a public service of The British Dietetic Association intended for information only.

It is not a substitute for proper medical diagnosis or dietary advice given by a dietitian.

To check that your dietitian is registered check www.hpc-uk.org.

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