Fad Diets

Desperate Food for Desperate People

Pick up any women's magazine at the grocery store and some sort of "take off weight fast" scheme will be headlined on the cover. Fad diets are advertised exhaustively on television, some endorsed by happy celebrities. The non-celebrity endorsers often show suspicious "before" and "after" pictures that don't even look like the same person. If you want more information than a quick 15-second commercial, go to a bookstore and look at the thousands of books by doctors, nurses, nutritionists, and buy a skinny book. You won't read the fat book because fad diets are quick fixes for unhappy people. So what or whom do you believe? Which diet will work for you? Can you really take off all that weight is just DAYS or WEEKS and keep it off FOREVER?

Fad diets cash in on being new, unusual, and popular. They also share characteristics that should warn you that the diet may create more problems than it solves.

- Claims for success of the diet are almost too good to be true.
- Expensive special foods, supplements, consultations, videos, etc.
- A focus on eliminating one or more types of food like fats or carbohydrates. Such a diet, if you stick with it for a long time, may create nutritional deficiencies.
- Monotonous meal plans, making it difficult to stay on it for longer than a few days or weeks. Eating should be enjoyable.
- Enthusiastic promises for fast, safe weight loss, but the fine print remains the same—results are based on lower caloric intake and increased exercise.
- Drastic changes in daily food intake that aren't designed to help you change your unhealthy eating patterns over time.
- Everybody is talking about it.

The South Beach Diet, Weight Watchers, and the Zone Diet are examples of diet plans that have been around long enough to move from FAD (new! popular!) to being an established diet plan. They are no longer new and unusual. Large numbers of people have tried them, and there may be some research that can help you in choosing one of these. Look for the following:

- Recommendations based on studies that have been reviewed by other researchers.
- Recommendations that take into consideration the differences among individuals (such as size, weight, gender, medical condition, etc.).
- Endorsements by ethical groups such as the American Heart Association.

Nutrition is a science and the government's latest version of the Food Pyramid reflects that. The 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines did away with a generic food pyramid. There are now "My Pyramids" customized by each person's age, weight, height, and other factors. Knowing yourself (and your eating and exercise habits) is the first step in a long process that means personal change before the weight begins to come off and stay off. Your lifestyle must include exercise and a nourishing diet in portion sizes suitable to you as an individual.

For more information on fad diets please visit:

http://www.everydiet.org/fat_diets.htm
http://women.webmd.com/fad-diets
http://www.mypyramid.gov/

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