



The Dangers of Weight Reduction Fad Diets

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The American problem with weight control is real. The national pastime is finding the latest reducing diet. All of the dietary regimes promise a rapid loss of weight, with little effort by the dieter. Some of the fad diets that promise an instantaneous weight loss can be very dangerous. Let's look at some of the fad diets that can be harmful to the individual.

The All One Food Item Diet

Examples of this type of diet include all grapefruit, all egg, all banana or all rice diets. They are very monotonous, so, luckily, most people don't stay with them for more than a few days. They are nutritionally inadequate, because no one food provides all the necessary nutrients.

The Liquid Protein Diet

This diet calls for the elimination of food for one or more months. In place of food, dieters were given a 300-calorie formula — the liquid protein. The liquid protein is an incomplete protein which has added minerals and vitamins. The purpose of using the formula was to bring about rapid loss of body weight without the severe loss of tissue protein that results from total fasting. For this reason, it was labeled the "protein-sparing, modified-fast diet." Numerous deaths occurred among women who had been following this diet. The liquid protein product and diets were declared unsafe by the Food and Drug Administration.

The Low Carbohydrate Diet

The low carbohydrate diet has been called by many names. They all are low in carbohydrates, high in protein and fat. The results are also the same: a low carbohydrate diet puts a person into a

metabolic state known as ketosis, characterized by the rapid burning of fat. It is not a desirable condition, and it can lead to coma and death.

The Anti-Cellulite Diet

This diet claims to rid the body of excess water and toxic waste, and to get rid of cellulite, which the authors claim is a special kind of fat that traps water and waste and gives the appearance of lumps beneath the skin. Actually, cellulite is just another name for fat. It looks different because the areas of the body that have deposits of cellulite are the areas that have the greatest capacity to store fat. Strands of fibrous connective tissue connect the skin over the fat to the deeper tissues, and it's the fat pushing out against these strands that gives the skin a bumpy appearance. The anti-cellulite diet calls for the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, with meat eaten no more than once a day. Salt intake is reduced and liquids are avoided with meals. Over a long period of time, this diet could lead to deficiencies of iron and niacin.

The High Roughage or Bran Diet

This dietary regime claims that a reducing diet should "normalize" the digestive system. The diet recommends that the individual consume only foods high in roughage or fiber, such as whole grains, bran, raw fruits and vegetables, and that he eat moderate amounts of low fat meats, fish and poultry. Modifications of the basic plan call for the addition of two teaspoons of bran three times per day. The theory behind the high fiber diet is that if the transit time of food through the digestive tract is increased, fewer calories will be obtained per the foods consumed, and weight loss will result. If this dietary regime is followed for extended periods of time, deficiency of certain trace minerals could occur.

Fasting

Short-term or one-day fasting generally causes no serious metabolic disturbances, but prolonged fasting can be dangerous. Even though the loss of body fat exceeds the loss of structural protein, the loss of muscle and organ tissue is the most serious result of fasting.

Jaw-wiring

This is done so that a person cannot chew and must limit food intake to liquids, and has been tried as a way to bring about weight loss. This, too, is a temporary measure.

Surgical Weight Control

This is used only as a last resort for treating grossly obese people who have not responded to traditional methods of weight control and whose obesity is considered life-threatening. One type is bypass surgery, where a portion of the intestine is removed. As a result, an individual's ability to absorb nutrients is reduced drastically. This process is considered very dangerous. Surgical removal of adipose tissue and some skin has also been done as a form of cosmetic surgery. Although this has the immediate effect of improving the obese person's appearance, it does not cure the person's eating and weight-gain problems.

Exercise Machines

These are of two types: active, or those with which the dieter does something (bicycles, treadmill, weights), and passive, or those which do something to the dieter (vibrators or rollers). Machines, such as vibrators and the like, that involve a passive dieter are ineffective in causing weight loss and often are promoted by false and misleading claims. Active exercise is effective in weight reducing programs.

Wearable Products

This group includes sauna shorts, belts and body wraps. They are ineffective, and some are dangerous because they can lead to dehydration and heat exhaustion.

Prescription Drugs or Injections

These include appetite depressants, such as amphetamines; thyroid pills and diuretics; and human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), which is also injected to cause weight loss. Some of the drugs can be addictive and can have serious side effects.

They are ineffective in reducing appetite or weight. For these reasons, their use as an aid in losing weight is not considered wise except in special circumstances.

Nonprescription Diet Aids or Drugs

Many of these are sold over the counter without a prescription. Included are a bulk-producing aid, methylcellulose, which is supposed to make the dieter feel full before eating; diuretic pills, which cause excessive water excretion from the body; reducing candy, which is supposed to take your appetite away if you eat it before a meal; and fad pills, which are a combination of some of the above substances. With all of these substances, the dieter will not lose weight unless he actually eats less. They don't melt away fat.

Fad diets come and go with regularity. Each diet promises a "painless" weight loss. Some make such promises as you will feel younger, more attractive or more energetic. Most do cause a very rapid weight loss, but remember, for a diet to be successful, it must be one that you can live with for a long period of time. The recommended weight loss is only 2-3 pounds per week, and if you are 50 pounds overweight, this requires a diet that you will have to follow for over 20 weeks, or four months.

Before you try the next fad diet, ask yourself these questions:

Can I follow this regime for more than one week?

Is the diet nutritionally well-balanced?

Is it really low in calories?

Is it too expensive for my budget?

Will I learn to eat more sensibly, and will I establish good food habits if I follow this diet?

Remember, weight loss is not easy. It takes time and effort to lose unwanted pounds, and the best way to approach weight control is to prevent unwanted weight gain.

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20M—10-81, Revision

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