

Danger Signs of a Fad Diet

Want to maintain a healthy weight? Want to build muscle and lose fat? Confused by conflicting claims, testimonials and hype by so-called experts? These signs can help you spot a diet disaster before it strikes you. **Forget plans, products and pills that promise:**

Rapid weight loss

Slow, steady weight loss is more likely to last than dramatic weight changes. Healthy plans aim for a loss of no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 pounds per week. If you lose weight quickly, you'll lose muscle, bone and water - and only a little bit of fat.

Hazardous ingredients

Some compounds in over-the-counter products can be dangerous and even deadly. **Avoid all products with ephedra ephedrine and Ma Huang**, which have been associated with nerve damage, heart attacks and sudden death.

Magic foods or supplements

There are no miracle foods or pills that melt fat away. There is nothing that will burn fat while you sleep. There are no super foods that can magically change your genetic code. And, there is no scientific proof that any food is addictive.

Bizarre quantities and limitations

Be wary of diets that allow unlimited quantities of any food - like grapefruit or cabbage soup. Avoid any diet that eliminates entire food groups. Even if you take a vitamin/mineral supplement, you'll miss some critical nutrients.

Specific food combinations

Forget it. Eating the "wrong" combinations of food doesn't cause them to turn to fat immediately - or to produce toxins. There is no evidence that combining certain foods or eating foods at specific times of day will help in weight loss.

Rigid menus

Life is already complicated enough. Limiting food choices or following rigid meal plans can be an overwhelming, distasteful task. What you need is a realistic, flexible eating style that helps you be your best - in class, sports and life.

No need to exercise

Not likely. Regular physical activity is essential for permanent weight control - and for overall good health. The key to success is to find physical activities that you enjoy - and then aim for 30 to 45 minutes of activity on most days of the week.

