

# Creating Health & Nutrition Fact Sheets

**W**hen it comes to sorting out nutrition information, how do you know if it is reliable? Reliable information does not support food fads or unbalanced eating. The American Dietetic Association defines “food fads” as “unreasonable or exaggerated beliefs that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutrient supplements, or combinations of certain foods may cure disease, convey special health benefits, or offer quick weight loss.”

In reality, there is no “super food” or extremely unbalanced diet that can quickly and safely remove weight gained from overeating or inactivity and help you keep it off over time. This is because most fad diets don’t teach new eating habits. Many require you to give up your favorite foods. As a result,

## Nutrition Fact or Fiction?

people usually don’t stick to them. How can you find out if a diet plan or dietary supplement is safe to use? Follow these tips to help evaluate a new product, diet, or recommendation:

- If it sounds too good to be true, it is—especially if the diet or product offers a “quick fix.”
- Avoid products offering a guaranteed cure or that promote “limited-time offers.”
- Watch out for products that describe certain foods as “good” or “bad.”
- Is the source of the information, such as a book author, trying to sell an unbal-

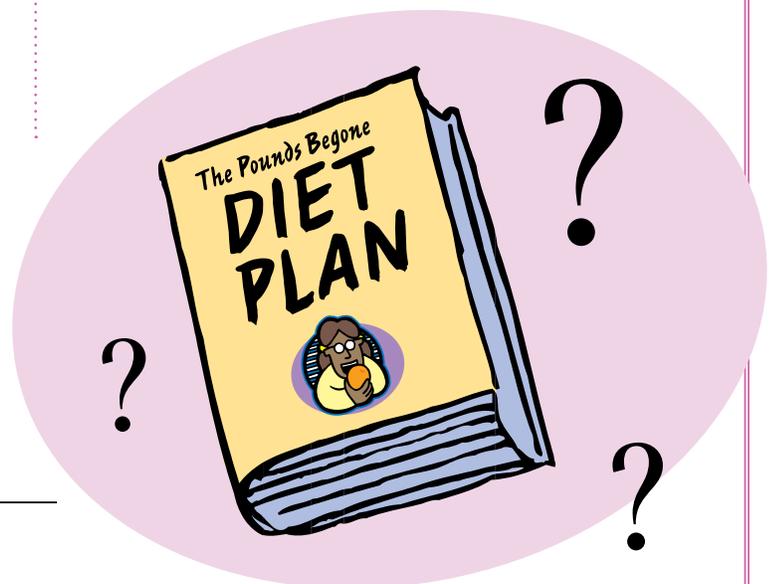
- anced diet plan or a product, such as supplements?
- Fad diets may require you to avoid foods or entire food groups. Countless reputable studies over many years have shown that balance and variety are needed for good health. Any diet that requires you to give up whole categories of foods

### Tip

Save money and avoid possible health complications—check the facts before buying any new diet, dietary supplement, or nutrition recommendation.

and take supplements to replace their nutrients is, by definition, unbalanced.

- What about the Internet? The Internet can be a source of misinformation, or



it can help you find out whether a dietary approach or product is based on science and isn't a fad.

### The Bottom Line

Look to see if the product's or diet plan's claims are backed up by a body of scientific research rather than just one study—or none at all. Do reputable scientific and professional organizations support the claims? If the answers to these questions are no, then you can find a better, healthier weight-loss plan that is right for you. Consult a registered dietitian. He or she will work with you to develop a personalized plan providing a balanced approach for long-term success. To find a registered dietitian, contact your local hospital or check the American Dietetic Association website, [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

The following are other reputable professional organizations that can provide information on balanced diets or bogus diet products:

- American Dietetic Association: [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- Society for Nutrition Education
- Food and Drug Administration: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)
- Federal Trade Commission: [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov)
- United States Department of Agriculture: [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov) and [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)
- Many universities have nutrition departments and an extension service. In Pennsylvania, contact [extension.psu.edu](http://extension.psu.edu) or your local extension office.

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Source: [www.eatright.org/ada/files/MIS.pdf](http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/MIS.pdf), accessed March 14, 2007.

### **extension.psu.edu**

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