



Fad Diets - February 2012

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Look through any magazine today or newspaper and you will see the latest **fad diet** that will promise to help you lose several pounds in weight in just a matter of weeks.

Very tempting don't you think especially if you have been trying to lose weight quickly for your holidays or a special occasion. The question is: **Do fad diets work?**

What is a Fad diet?

Many people are tempted to go on a Fad diet! So what are these diets?

Usually Fad diets are quick fix diets where you would lose weight quickly by unsafe and unrealistic methods. There is generally a quick loss in weight but sadly the weight piles back on again once you return to your old eating habits and lifestyle.

Fad diets do not teach healthy lifestyle habits for long-term weight management, they will often encourage you to avoid certain food groups - low-carb, low-calorie, or low-fat.

Has anyone been able to stay on these diets for a long period of time? And if they did lose weight, did the pounds stay off once they went back to a more normal eating style? If a diet really worked, we'd all be on it, and we'd stay on it. The reality is that fad diets don't work.

Let us look at some Fad diets...

The Atkin's Diet

= *Low carbohydrate, high protein and high fat diet.*

The first source of energy for our bodies is carbohydrates and a lack causes the body to use fat as the main energy source, forcing it to burn fat.

On this diet you are encouraged to eat high amounts of fats, particularly saturates, which may increase the risk of heart disease. There are also concerns of the unbalanced nature of the Atkins diet, which may lead to nutritional deficiencies and long-term health problems in later life. In the absence of carbohydrates, the body is forced to burn dietary/body fat and protein to fulfil its energy needs.

The breakdown products of burning large quantities of body fat for fuel are called ketones, these begin to accumulate in the body and high levels in the body can cause all kinds of damage to vital organs such as the liver and the kidneys. The build-up upsets the body's balance of acids and alkaline, causing a condition called acidosis. When these levels of ketones reach critical levels they can have serious consequences to a person's health, so this diet should only be used for a few weeks and not long term.

You will certainly lose weight quickly but what would be the consequences to your health?

The Hay Diet.

This diet based on the idea that the body is unable to cope with proteins and carbohydrates at the same time because of the way they are digested. This came from the belief that the human body is used to eating only one type of food at time and that the combining of food is a modern habit that are ancestors never did.

The main rule to follow on this diet is not to consume protein and carbohydrates together. The combination of these two foods together appears to prevent proteins from being digested properly in the gut and can lead to an accumulation of toxins.

The hay diet suggests that modern eating habits are contributing to poor elimination of wastes & toxins due to the combination of eating all the food groups together at the same time. You can combine food but never protein and starchy carbohydrate together. Some people lose weight following the Hay Diet.

Pros:

- Intake of foods not restricted
- Allowed to snack on neutral foods
- Should lose weight on this diet

Cons:

- No scientific basis
- Difficult to understand (some foods contain proteins and starches)
- Complicated plan of which foods can be mixed
- Difficult to follow long term

Cabbage Soup diet

Not a suitable diet for anyone who needs to lose more than a few pounds and should not be followed for more than seven days. The weight loss will unfortunately only be temporary.

This diet focuses on eating primarily one type of food, which can cause nutritional deficiencies

Due to the restrictiveness of this diet you consume very few calories placing the body in the starvation mode. This diet totally lacks protein, healthy fats and other key nutrients such as calcium and iron

The Cabbage Soup Diet interferes with your ability to maintain weight loss long-term. Although you can lose several pounds in the first week of the diet, dieters usually regain the weight quickly after stopping the diet.

Pros:

- Lose weight
- Not restricted on the amount of soup you eat
- Short diet period - 1 week
- Perfect if you have a special event to go to

Cons:

- Boring diet
- Short term side effects can include headaches, weakness and decreased concentration
- Rapid weight loss is mainly water and is only temporary as very little actual fat is burnt
- Diet lacks the required vitamins and minerals the body needs

The Dukan Diet (Popular diet at the moment)- similar to Aitken's Diet

This diet is based around a high protein, low carbohydrate diet. Important things to consider with this diet when you are considering restricting certain food groups such as carbohydrates, do the benefits of losing weight this way, outweigh the effects it can have on your health.

'Attack Phase' which lasts between 2 and 10 days depending upon how much weight you have to lose. Provides a substantial and rapid weight loss, you only eat protein during this phase.

'Cruise' Next phase is when you have lost the bulk of your weight and continue to reach your target by alternating protein with vegetables, so proteins one day and then proteins & vegetables the next.

'Consolidation' you can then reintroduce small amounts of carbohydrates back into your diet and allowing one special meal a week of 'Starter, Main & Dessert'.

'Stabilisation' this phase is to maintain your ideal weight gradually introducing small amounts of carbohydrates back into your diet.

Pros:

- No calorie counting or portion control
- It is a diet that meat eaters will love
- Lose weight quickly so will increase motivation especially if you are very obese
- Easy diet to follow

Cons:

- Protein main source of energy, so fat will be used as energy source instead of carbohydrates producing Ketosis; and whilst you will lose a huge amount of weight, this will put an extra burden on your liver and kidney function similar to the Aitkens diet.
- Being on this diet long-term could cause serious damage to your health, bad breath, a metallic taste in your mouth and strong urine odor.
- The Attack and Cruise phases of the Diet are very restrictive and if you have a lot of weight to lose you would be on this restrictive diet for some time, creating nutritional deficiencies due to the lack of other food groups and have a negative impact on your health.

The South Beach Diet

Similar to Atkins (low-carbs)

This diet starts out restricting saturated fats and most types of carbohydrates. Sources of complex carbohydrates are progressively added over the course of the diet, and a little more saturated fat in the final phase.

The South Beach diet also emphasizes the difference between good and bad carbohydrates, and good and bad fats. It also stresses a person to make permanent healthy changes to their way of eating suggesting wholegrain, vegetables, and healthy oils.

Easy to follow and you don't need to count calories.

Liquid Diets

All liquid diet programs claimed you would lose weight on them.

These diets are usually 800 to 1000 calories per day or less, which will virtually always trigger your body's starvation response. The weight lost from liquid diets can be dramatic - but not nearly as dramatic as the weight regain afterward. The fact is, liquid formula diets do not teach you how to eat in order to STAY slim for the long term. The fat burning solution is to eat real, whole food as much as possible, to eat small frequent meals throughout the day, and avoid very low calorie "liquid diet" products unless your doctor advises it for a specific reason.

GI diets

A GI diet is based on the ***GI (glycaemic index)***, which simply encourages you to eat plenty of foods with a low GI value and avoid those with a high GI value. This helps to prevent swings in blood sugar, helping you feel fuller for longer.

The GI is based on a scale, which runs from 0 to 100 and usually uses glucose - which has a GI value of 100 - as the reference.

Foods with a low GI value is digested slowly and releases glucose into the blood slowly; keeping insulin levels constant (which mean you will burn fat easier) and providing you with a steady supply of energy, leaving you feeling satisfied longer so that you're less likely to snack. In contrast, foods with a high GI value cause a rapid - but short-lived - rise in blood sugar; affecting insulin levels (which stops your from burning fat); this leaves you lacking in energy and feeling hungry within a short time, with the result that you end up reaching for a snack.

However, most GI diets also recommend cutting down on fat, especially saturates. This means many of the foods that have a low GI value but are high in fat are still limited.

Pros - Sustains energy for longer, helps to reduce snacking, lose weight quickly and educates you in what foods are more suited to balancing blood sugar.

Cons - Takes time to work out what foods are affected by cooking methods or how eating proteins can affect digestion and absorption of low & high GI foods.

So what does work?

If you really want to lose weight it is very simple and not rocket science!!!!

Cut down on portion sizes, you need to eat regularly - 3 small main meals a day and healthy snacks. Vary the foods that you eat and increase your activity levels; if you decrease the amount of calories you consume you **will** lose weight.

Think of your body like a car, it needs the right type of fuel to make it run properly and if you put diesel into a car that runs on petrol it won't work. The body needs healthy fuel, the right balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fat to develop properly, as well as a host of other nutrients. Each of these vitamins and minerals regulates a bodily process such as insulin to help you burn fat naturally. When you go on a fad diet and exclude any of the necessary nutrients, you could be putting your health at risk.