April’s Healthy Eating Tip of the Month:
Busting Fad Diet Claims!

Have you ever tried going on a diet or lost weight quickly from a fad diet, but then just as quickly gained the weight back? The diet industry is very successful because it caters to our desire for fast results. But that’s just it, the diet industry is composed of businesses that will do what it takes to make money and not necessarily what’s best for consumers.

As a general rule of thumb, if a diet sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Fad diets are tempting, but may not improve overall healthy eating habits. Healthy eating is a lifestyle, not a “diet”.

Check out the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month board in the University Hospital cafeteria for handouts and to enter a drawing to win a cookbook!
Why Do We Diet?

Physical:
- Skipping meals and not eating enough food during the day may decrease the quality and the amount of calories burned while exercising.
- Chronic dieting may lead to low bone mass.
- An extremely restrictive diet can lead to frequent weight loss and weight regain, which may increase your risk for heart disease.

Psychological:
- Following fad diets can lead to unrealistic expectations about amount of weight loss.
- Dieters ruminate on food and eating more often than non-dieters.
- 35% of “normal dieters” move towards pathological dieting, and 20-25% of those individuals develop partial or full-syndrome eating disorders.

Peer/Familial influence:
- Daughters are more likely to diet if they see their mothers diet.
- In a national survey of over 11,000 high school students, 43% of the girls reported dieting, yet 25% of the dieters didn’t even think they were overweight.

Media Influence:
- Diet ads are everywhere in various forms of media suggesting that they have the “cure” for any body issue.
- Celebrity bodies are constantly critiqued. Their weight is a major topic emphasized in the media.

Body Dissatisfaction:
- 2 out of 5 women and 1 out of 5 men would trade 5 years of their lives in order to reach their weight goals.
- One study found that 53% of 13 year-old American girls are "unhappy with their bodies” and by age 17, the number increases to 78%.

Crash Dieting Defined: “A weight loss diet undertaken on an urgent, short-term basis with the aim of achieving very rapid results.”

-Oxford Dictionaries

1. True or False?

Each day Americans spend approximately $109 million on dieting or diet-related products.

(Answer key located on the prize page)
Three Main Nutrients the Body Needs!

Carbohydrate

- Carbs are the primary source of energy for the body.
  - When the carbs are digested they are converted to glucose.
  - There are two kinds of carbs: complex and simple. Complex carbs contain more fiber and take longer to digest compared to simple carbs which are converted to energy more quickly.
  - Should contribute 45-65% of total calories per day—this means that about half of your daily food should come from carbs!

Protein

- Protein is the building block for our muscles and organs.
  - Protein contributes to growth and development.
  - Protein is essential for healing wounds and injuries.
  - Protein in food delays digestion and helps prolong the feeling of fullness.
  - About 10-35% of total calories or food consumed in one day should be protein!

Fat

- Fat provides cushioning and protection for organs and insulation for the body.
  - The fat in food delays digestion and prolongs the feeling of fullness.
  - Fat is necessary for the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K.
  - Fat enhances the flavors in food.
  - About 20-35% of total calories or food consumed in one day should come from fat!

2. True or False?

Eating fat makes you fat.
(Answer key located on the prize page)

Average Carb/Protein/Fat ratios needed per day
Food Sources

Carbohydrate

- **Grains**: rice, bread, cereal
- **Fruit**: fresh, canned, or dried
- **Starchy Vegetables**: potatoes, winter squash, corn, peas
- **Dairy**: milk, yogurt, cheese
- **Beans and legumes** (also a source of protein!)
- **Sweets**: cookies, candy, ice cream

*Small amounts in:*

- **Non-starchy Vegetables**: carrots, broccoli, cauliflower

Protein

- **Dairy**: milk, yogurt, cottage cheese
- **Meats**: beef, poultry, fish, eggs
- **Beans**: black, kidney, garbanzo, lentils
- **Meat Substitutes**: tofu, soy protein imitation meats
- **Other**: peanut butter, nuts, whole grain products

Fat

**Good sources of fat (unsaturated):**

- Raw or roasted nuts
- Avocado
- Oils
  - Olive, Canola, Walnut, Flaxseed, Sunflower, or Safflower
- Nut butters
  - Almond, Peanut

3. True or False?

*Carbs are sugar and sugar is bad so we shouldn’t eat foods with carbs.*

(answer key located on the prize page)
The Atkins Diet

How it Works:

• The diet begins with a very low carbohydrate allowance of 20 grams per day.

• The Claim: 15 lb weight loss during the first 2 weeks of the diet due to an increase in the breakdown of fat instead of carbs.

• The goal of this diet is to find your “Atkins Carbohydrate Metabolism” (ACE), which is defined as finding the right number of carbs for your body in order to maintain your weight loss. If you begin to gain weight decrease the amount of carbs consumed in one day.

• This diet is higher in protein and fat to compensate for very little calories from carbs.

The Belly Fat Cure

How it Works:

• The Claim: Lose 4-9 lbs per week without monitoring caloric intake or exercising.

• There is a 30-80 gram daily carb allowance range.

• Discourages eating fruit and low fat dairy.

• Claims no exercise or calorie tracking are needed for weight loss and stated on the website that exercise is actually counterproductive towards weight loss efforts.

• The author stated that high fat, high-cholesterol intake will not affect someone with heart disease or high cholesterol levels.

Read on to find out the facts about carbs!

4. True or False?
Increased fruit and vegetable intake may improve cardiovascular health.
(answer key located on the prize page)
A low carb diet will promote weight loss when followed correctly, BUT is difficult to maintain over time.

Restricting one type of food leads to increased thoughts and desires for that food!

The Recommendations:

1. Eat from all of the food groups each day: grains, meat/protein, dairy, fruits and vegetables.
2. Try to choose whole grain foods more often, such as whole wheat breads instead of white bread and breakfast cereals with at least 3-4 grams of fiber per serving.
3. Increase fruit and vegetable intake at each meal to add volume if you find yourself still feeling hungry.
4. Any diet that limits foods with many healthy benefits (i.e. whole grains, fruit and vegetables) is too restrictive and should not be followed long-term.
5. Exercise is an essential part of healthy eating and weight management!

The Facts:

- Your body needs carbohydrates; it is the brain’s primary source of fuel.
- Healthy weight loss should occur gradually; approximately 1-2 lbs per week in order to promote long-term weight loss and maintenance.
- For a balanced diet, 50% of total daily calories should come from carbs.
- Increased fruit and vegetable intake may improve cardiovascular health.
- Dairy provides calcium and vitamin D which are two nutrients that promote healthy bones.
- It is important to choose lean cuts of meat and consume good fat in moderation.
- Exercise is beneficial for both weight management and heart health.
Low Fat Diets

“Eat More Weigh Less”

**Diet Defined:**
- Allows only ~10% of total calories per day from fat.
- Promotes vegetarian protein instead of meat (i.e. beans, tofu, etc.)
- Discourages all fats including healthy fats.

→ Although this is a fad diet there are some benefits to a lower fat intake including possibly delaying the progression of heart disease.

**The CONS:**
- Very low in fat: < 10% total calories which is 2/3 less fat than the USDA’s recommendations for daily fat intake.
- There is the possibility of deficiency in fat soluble vitamins (A,D,E,K) when very little fat is consumed.
- There will be decreased satiety with low protein, low fat and high carb ratios.
- **Too rigorous of a diet can cause weight cycling,** which is not healthy for your body.

**The Pritikin Diet**

**Diet Defined:**
- Allows ~10% of total calories per day from fat.
- Recommends only 3.5 ounces of protein per day which is about half of the USDA’s recommendations.
- This diet can be followed at the Pritikin Longevity Center and Spa, which is a wellness program with this diet incorporated into the program.

Unlike many other fad diets this one:
- Promotes fruit, vegetable and whole grain intake.
- Recommends daily exercise.

→ Although this diet provides some beneficial tips, the fat and protein are very low and it may be too restrictive for long-term maintenance.

5. True or False?

Dieting to lose weight is often related to weight gain due to the high occurrence of binge eating.
• Replaces breakfast and lunch with a single serving of Special K cereal + fat free milk.
• This is a very low calorie diet.

Special K Diet

• Special K is low in fiber and protein—two important nutrients to consume at meals and to look for in a breakfast cereal.
• This diet not sustainable long term.

HCG Diet

• Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG): a hormone that promotes egg development within the ovary during ovulation.
• The diet is very low in calories: 500-900 calories/day.

Nutrisystem or Jenny Craig

• These are pre-portioned meals; the companies are doing the calorie and portion control for you.

Other Popular Diets

• This product is controversial and is expensive and not currently FDA approved for weight loss.
• Consuming < 1000-1200 calories/day for the average adult is not recommended and can slow the metabolism.

• This can be an expensive diet to maintain.
Pop Culture: Celebrities are always losing and gaining weight and promoting fad diets. They are part of the diet industry’s advertising plans.

Two Articles From the Huffington Post:

“hCG ‘Diet’ Controversy: Dangerous Diet Or Healthy Hormone Treatment?”

“‘HCG Diet’ for Weight Loss?”

**Summary:** This diet is controversial but seems to be catching the dieter’s attention. The long-term side effects of taking HCG for weight loss are unclear. Talk show host, Dr. Oz, stated that this diet requires further research, however, many physicians do not support this diet. Some current research does not support the claim that the HCG hormone contributes to weight loss, but rather it’s the extreme caloric restriction alone causing the larges losses. There is a danger of slowing the metabolism with this diet. There is also a risk of muscle mass loss with such a low caloric intake.

*http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-katz-md/hcg-diet-for-weight-loss_b_809660.html*

*http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/22/hcg-diet-controversy_n_826837.html*

More News: There is an increase in the prevalence of eating disorders and disordered eating habits in the U.S. over the years stemming from the diet-obsessed culture.
Although fad diets have some positive tips, overall they do not promote long-term weight management. You may drop weight quicker with a starvation diet at first, but in the long run, you will have less energy and will actually slow your metabolism—which is entirely counterproductive! Additionally, any weight regained may be more fat than muscle. I challenge you to choose small, attainable goals towards better health. For example, try exercising one more time per week than you do now. Or try a new fruit or vegetable. These are small changes that can lead to bigger ones that will promote overall wellness better than a fad diet ever will!

For more information on fad diets and healthy eating visit:

www.eatright.org
www.nutrition.gov
www.mypyramid.gov
www.diet.com
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
Win a Prize!!!

Visit the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month bulletin board located in the U of M cafeteria on the 2nd floor of University Hospital for more information on healthy eating and fad diet busters. Don’t forget to enter your name into the drawing to win a prize!

WHAT’S THE PRIZE??

This cookbook promotes healthy cooking, but discourages avoiding food groups and promotes moderation and balance!

GOOD LUCK!!

**Answer Key:**
1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
References


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