



Fad diets promise dramatic results and cycle in and out of fashion every few decades. These diets are usually unhealthy and limit intake of nutrients necessary for optimal health. Also, fad diets promise rapid weight-loss instead of long-term success, and can be unhealthy. Learn how to recognize a fad diet and make diet decisions based on health and long-term success.

### Can you recognize a Fad Diet?

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|---|------|-------|
| 1. Losing 5 or more pounds a week proves that a diet is effective in burning fat.                       | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. It is healthy to lose weight rapidly, so long as no supplements are involved.                        | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. It is okay to eliminate a food group if you still eat an otherwise “normal diet.”                    | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. Physical activity is not necessary to maintain or lose weight.                                       | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Grains, fruit, and other carbohydrates are fattening and should be avoided.                          | TRUE | FALSE |
| 6. Eating excessive protein is optimal in weight loss and when building muscle.                         | TRUE | FALSE |
| 7. Diet pills are a key ingredient to any weight loss regimen.  | TRUE | FALSE |
| 8. The best way to lose weight is by following a strict diet.   | TRUE | FALSE |
| 9. Saturated fat can be good for you if your diet contains no sugar.                                    | TRUE | FALSE |
| 10. Scientific research is not necessary if the diet was written by a physician or health professional. | TRUE | FALSE |

### Why are Fad Diets so popular?

- Individuals are usually willing to try anything that assures desired results.
- Promise of rapid and dramatic results
- Many cause weight loss during the first few weeks, but individuals then gain lost weight back.
- Are more tempting because they are short-term, versus long-term eating and physical activity lifestyles changes.

### How to recognize a Fad Diet:

- Promises a quick fix.
- Offers dire warnings about a food or product.
- Makes statements that contradict reputable health groups.
- Requires the purchase of certain products.
- Makes the same recommendations for everyone.
- Classifies food as “good” or “bad.”
- Uses “before and after” pictures as supportive evidence.
- Draws attention by using testimonials from either “consumers” or health professionals.

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1. FALSE Research has shown that the safest way to lose weight and keep it off is to lose about  $\frac{1}{2}$  -2 pounds per week. This weight loss should include healthier food choices, moderate food portions, and daily physical activity
2. FALSE Rapid weight loss (3+ pounds after first couple of weeks) has been associated with a higher risk for developing gallbladder stones (gallstones).
3. FALSE Eliminating food groups may also limit intake of necessary nutrients. A healthy diet adequately balances intake of foods from all food groups.
4. FALSE Exercise helps build more muscle. Because more muscle aids in burning calories, being physically active is recommended with any weight-loss program. Physical activity, if performed on a regular basis, can help one maintain or lose weight.
5. FALSE Specific food groups, such as grains, fruit, or carbohydrates do not cause weight gain. It is the TOTAL number of calories consumed that should be monitored. Excess calories from any food group can eventually turn into body fat. Limitations on fruit and grains can be unhealthy and lead to health problems such as constipation due to lack of adequate fiber.
6. FALSE Protein in excess can lead to weight gain. Any excess of food calories, regardless of where they come from, are usually stored as body fat for future usage. Also, excess protein often means an increase in fat and cholesterol intake, and may increase the risk for heart disease.
7. FALSE Unfortunately, most of the claims made by diet pills are not scientifically tested and are often unsafe. It is important to keep in mind that ingredients found on diet pills are usually ineffective, and sometimes detrimental to health. Good questions to keep in mind about diet pills are: What are they? Do they work? And are they safe?
8. FALSE The name says it all: "strict." Strict diets limit intake of important and vital nutrients, and can have adverse effects on the body. Any diet that excludes or limits food groups does not offer a balanced diet and increases the risk of nutrient deficiencies.
9. FALSE Whether the diet contains sugar or not, saturated fat intake should be limited. Because saturated fats increase the risk for atherosclerosis (blockage of arterial walls) and may lead to heart disease, limiting saturated fat intake to about 10% of the total calories consumed per day is recommended.
10. FALSE Scientific research assures that diet claims, or any claim per se, are indeed effective and safe for individuals. Sound evidence of efficacy, and most importantly, safety, is always preferable if a claim is made.

**A safe and effective weight-loss program should include:**

- Healthy and balanced meals that do not restrict specific foods or food groups, but reduce total calorie intake.
- Physical activity.
- Slow and healthy weight-loss (1/2-2 pounds per week).
- Healthy behavior changes.

**Research suggests that the best way to attain and/or maintain a healthy weight is by following a balanced diet and participating in regular physical activity!**

**Sources:**

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- American Heart Association: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)