

Weight-Loss Alert: Say No to the Dieting Hype

The hype about “quick” and “easy” weight loss is all around us. All you need to do is watch the commercials on television, see the ads in newspapers and magazines, or go on the Internet and you are likely to be told “Lose 30 pounds in 30 days,” “Eat all you want and still lose weight!” or “Melt fat away while you sleep.” Although it would be nice if these claims were true, they aren’t.

So before going on a diet or investing in diet fads and products that will only make your wallet slimmer, learn when to be wary of weight-loss claims. Here is what everyone should know!

There Is No Magic Bullet for Effective Weight Loss

Science has yet to come up with a quick and easy way to lose weight. So when a claim for a diet program, pill, supplement, or other product sounds too good to be true, it is! According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), be especially wary of claims that products will “burn,” “block,” or “flush” fat from the body. This is simply not possible.

Besides these claims, many fad diets are associated with science-like claims including new, unproven theories about ways to stimulate the body to lose weight. To separate fact from fiction, keep these points in mind:

- Any claims about losing weight effortlessly are false. The only proven way to lose weight is by taking in fewer calories a day than your body expends. The recommended approach is to follow a comprehensive program that combines a balanced reduced-calorie diet with physical activity and a supportive environment.
- Very-low calorie diets precipitate rapid weight-loss that can be harmful to your health and are likely to lead to weight regain. Although rapid weight loss can sometimes be medically necessary, most weight management experts recommend a modest energy deficit of approximately 500 calories a day.
- Fad diets that drastically restrict or eliminate carbohydrates, fat or protein or that eliminate a food group are not healthy and are difficult to maintain over time. For example, low-carb diets send dieters into a cycle of quick weight loss, followed by a rebound weight gain once normal eating resumes.

Common Red Flags

Because ads for weight-loss products are so common, it is important to be skeptical of claims containing words like:

- Ancient ingredient
- Breakthrough
- Easy
- Effortless
- Exclusive
- Exotic
- Guaranteed
- Miraculous
- Magical
- New discovery

According to the FTC, claims about losing a lot of weight quickly are very common and are usually linked with four measurements of success: pounds, inches, dress size, and body fat. Be on the lookout if the weight-loss plan or product makes these promises:

- Safely enables you to lose more than three pounds a week for more than four weeks
- Speeds up your metabolism to burn fat fast
- Causes substantial weight-loss for all users
- Blocks the absorption of calories or fat by the body

The FTC also cautions consumers to be on the lookout for the following:

- Before and after photos in ads
- Claims of "Rapid" or "Permanent" Weight-loss
- Products that say "No Diet or Exercise Needed"
- Claims that a product is "Clinically Proven" or "Doctor-Approved"
- Products that are advertised as "Natural" and "Safe"

In short, don't fall for the hype. Achieving a healthy weight is possible but it requires setting achievable goals and gradually losing weight over a series of months (or longer depending on the amount of weight needed to lose) through a combination of a reduced calorie diet and more physical activity. Also, don't overlook the benefits of seeking support. Research has shown that dieters who recruited friends or family members to help them had better results losing weight and keeping it off than dieters who had no buddy system to rely on.

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