

Intro: Fad Diets & Health Weight Management

Module
3

This module is designed to help you spot a fad diet and teach you about healthy weight management. Fad diets usually advertise extreme claims of quick weight loss and may suggest eating habits that could have harmful effects on your body. In this module, you will learn that healthy weight management is about variety, balance, and portion control. You will also learn how to spot dieting danger signs. At the end of this module, you will be skilled at helping your peers recognize fad diets, and be able to offer advice about healthy weight management. The activities and handouts will reinforce the lessons being taught.

Fad Diet Facts

Research has shown that teens who are trying to lose weight don't always use healthy approaches. Some teens use unhealthy measures to lose weight, such as:

- Skipping meals
- Taking diet pills
- Cutting out all carbohydrates

Although fad diets are popular and appeal to teens who want to lose weight fast, the results are usually temporary. People often gain back all of the weight they lost (and sometimes more) when they stop following the diet. More importantly, there are many health risks that are linked to fad diets because many of them lack essential nutrients that your body needs.

For example:

- Diets low in calcium can put you at risk for osteoporosis.
- Diets low in fiber can cause constipation.
- Diets that are extremely high in fiber can cause diarrhea, bloating, and gas.
- Diets low in calories (*energy*) can cause your periods to stop, make you feel irritable, cause headaches, and can affect your school performance.
- Diets low in fruits and vegetables deprive your body of important nutrients.
- Quick weight loss can cause your body to lose muscle.
- Diet pills can harm your heart.
- Diets low in protein can cause the breakdown of muscles.

Healthy Weight Management

While some people do lose weight when following a fad diet, it's important to remember that the weight loss is usually temporary, and many fad diets can be harmful to your body. In most cases, fad diets only allow you to eat certain foods. In addition, many of these diets do not provide enough vitamins and minerals. Not getting enough vitamins and minerals in the food you eat can lead to problems such as anemia (*low iron in your blood*) and osteoporosis (*a condition that causes your bones to break easily*).

There are much healthier ways to manage weight than trying to follow a fad diet. We lose weight by burning more calories than we take in, so to lose weight, try adding calorie-burning activities into your day. You can also lose weight by making changes in your diet, but be sure not to restrict your calories too much or too fast. A Registered Dietitian or Nutritionist can help you make healthy changes to your diet.

You can make easy changes to cut back on the calories you eat by:

- Choosing less sugary beverages, such as water or low-fat milk. Drinks like soda and juice are loaded with sugar and empty calories.
- Eating breakfast. This will prevent you from getting too hungry, which may lead to overeating later in the day. Eating breakfast can also give you energy to think at school.
- Packing fruit for a snack instead of buying chips or candy.
- Eating more whole grains. Chose whole grain bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, and high-fiber cereal which are more filling than refined grains, such as white bread, white pasta, and white rice.
- Choosing lean meats like skinless chicken, turkey, fish and vegetarian sources of protein, like beans and tofu, over fatty meats.
- Eating a serving of fruit and/or vegetable at each meal or as a snack.
- Watching your portion sizes. Eat until you are comfortably full, but not stuffed.

You can also fit exercise into your day by:

- Walking instead of taking the bus or driving
- Taking the stairs instead of using the elevator
- Looking for exercise videos on Youtube
- Joining a gym
- Joining a sports or dance team
- Going for a walk or bike ride with your friends or family