

# Fad Diets & Healthy Weight Management

**GOAL:** Participants will gain an understanding of the principles of weight management, including the dangers of fad dieting, healthy weight gain, and weight loss. Each participant will be able to tell the difference between healthy weight loss plans and strict (*or fad*) diets. At the end of the session, participants will understand the elements of successful weight loss and maintenance, and be able to identify helpful resources.

**POWER POINT PRESENTATION:**

Teens and Fad Diet Facts

**ESTIMATED TIME:**

60 minutes

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

PowerPoint presentation, chalk board and chalk, or poster board and markers, teen and/or health magazines, pens and pencils

**HANDOUTS NEEDED:**

Fad Diets vs. Healthy Weight Management:  
A Guide for Teens  
Magazine Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

**GAMES & ACTIVITIES:**

Magazine Scavenger Hunt

**PREPARATION:**

Choose an icebreaker and a game, copy all necessary handouts for participants

**DIRECTIONS FOR FACILITATOR**

1. Explain to the participants that they will be learning about fad diet facts, and the principals of healthy weight management.
2. Have participants introduce themselves one at a time.
3. Ask the group if they know what a fad diet is.
4. Start the PowerPoint presentation.
5. Refer to the "Talking Points" to help you narrate the PowerPoint presentation.
6. At the end of the presentation, discuss the key points with the group.
7. Pass out the Fad Diet guide.
8. Start the game.
9. When the game has ended, pass out the evaluation form, and collect them when participants have finished filling them out.

# Welcome to the Center for Young Women's Health Project Healthy Lifestyle

## Module 3: Teens & Fad Diet Facts



SLIDE 1

## True or False

- The diet industry targets teens with promises of quick weight loss.
- Fad dieting can keep teens from getting enough energy and nutrients they need to grow and develop properly.
- All teens who go on diets need to lose weight.



SLIDE 4



SLIDE 2

## True or False

- Teens who follow a strict diet for a while will usually keep the weight off.
- Adding calorie-burning activities into your day is a helpful way to lose weight



SLIDE 5

## Did you Know?

- Americans spend billions of dollars on dieting and diet products every year



SLIDE 3

## Why do Teens Diet?



SLIDE 6

## Quotes from Teens:

- “We feel pressure to look a certain way”
- “It’s hard to avoid “in your face” diet advertising”
- “We want to be in shape for sports”
- “We want to look good for spring break”



SLIDE 7

## True or False?

- When females diet, their periods may stop and they may lose bone mass.
- You should avoid carbs.



SLIDE 10

## Dieting Danger Signs

- Continues to diet even if not overweight
- Feels weak or dizzy
- May spend less time with family/friends
- Eats alone
- Performs poorly in school
- Is afraid of eating certain foods
- Loses weight very quickly



SLIDE 8

## Helping Teens Spot Fad Diets



SLIDE 11

## Teens at Risk

- Many teens don't get enough calcium, iron, and folic acid.
- This can have dangerous effects on the development of bones, joints, muscles, and even brain function



SLIDE 9

## Ask yourself: Does the diet...

- Promise quick weight loss?
- Require you to buy something in order to participate?
- Make claims that certain foods are bad?
- Include a warning for people with chronic disease?
- Use words like: “Amazing”, “Instant”, “Miraculous”?
- Require you to take pills?
- Require you to combine certain foods together or limits food choices?
- Claim you don't need to exercise?



SLIDE 12

## Teach your peers to “Ditch Diets” that tell them to...

- Starve, skip meals or drastically reduce food intake
- Eat only certain foods
- Completely cut fats, sugars, or carbs
- Use laxatives or diuretics
- Take pills, powders, or large doses of herbs
- Focus on quick weight loss without exercise



SLIDE 13

## The Real Deal

- There is no quick and easy way to lose weight
- Any diet that sounds too good to be true probably is



SLIDE 16

## How can you promote a healthy lifestyle among your peers?



SLIDE 14

## Healthy weight management involves:

- Making small, gradual changes that you will be able to keep up for the rest of your life, such as:
  - Eating nutritious foods from all 5 food groups
  - Cutting back on excess calorie intake from sugary drinks, candy, and fast foods
  - Regular physical activity
  - Motivation and a positive attitude
  - Eating a well balanced diet: (fruits, vegetables, lean meat, nuts, whole grains, vegetable oil, fat free/low fat cheese/dairy)



SLIDE 17

## You can help other teens by:

- Helping to clarify myths, such as false advertising
- Teaching them to read food labels
- Encouraging them to be active & set realistic goals
- Suggesting to limit playing video games, and computer/tv time
- Being a positive role model



SLIDE 15

## Is there a way to tell if a diet is healthy?

- Does the diet include:
  - A balance of all 5 food groups
  - Regular exercise or activity
  - Regular meals and snacks
  - Some of your favorite foods
  - Flexibility to fit your schedule
  - Foods you can find in restaurants and at social events



SLIDE 18

## Web Resources

- The Center for Young Women's Health at:  
[www.youngwomenshealth.org](http://www.youngwomenshealth.org)
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at:  
[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- The MyPlate website at:  
[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

# PowerPoint Talking Points

## **SLIDE 2\_MAGAZINE COVER**

### **“DIETS THAT WORK”**

Tell the group that many magazines have headlines about dieting on the cover.

Ask:

**Why do these ads get your attention?**

**What do you notice about the ad?**

Responses may include: the models are pretty, and/or skinny, the message about quick weight loss grabs your attention.

What we are not told is that the diets are often very strict, hard to follow, and once you stop the diet, you'll probably gain all the weight back and sometimes more.

## **SLIDE 3\_DID YOU KNOW:**

Before showing the slide, **ask the group how much money they think Americans spend on dieting and diet products each year.**

Then, read the bullet points aloud.

**Ask participants what they think they could do with this amount of money instead of spending it on dieting and diet products.**

## **SLIDE 4\_TRUE OR FALSE:**

Tell the group that you are going to play a true and false game.

Read (*or ask someone in the group*) to read each statement aloud. After each statement is read, ask the group if they think the answer is true or false, and why.

**Statement:** “The diet industry targets teens with promises of quick weight loss”

**Answer:** True

After participants respond by raising their hands, **ask the group why this statement is true.**

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**Statement:** Fad dieting can keep teens from getting enough energy and nutrients that they need to grow and develop properly.

**Answer:** True

After participants respond by raising their hands, **explain that this statement is true because many fad diets are restrictive and may tell you to avoid certain foods that provide you with nutrients that keep your body healthy. An example of this is the grapefruit diet, which lacks protein, fat, and other vitamins and minerals. Over time, if a teen does not get the necessary nutrients, they can set themselves up for**



health problems in the future, such as weak bones.

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**Statement:** All teens who go on diets need to lose weight.

**Answer:** False

After participants respond by raising their hands, ask the group if they know anyone who is on a diet but shouldn't be. Tell the group that research has shown that more and more younger girls (even ages 7 and 8) are dieting. Ask the group if they think they know why younger girls may be so concerned about their weight.

#### **SLIDE 5\_TRUE OR FALSE CONTINUED**

**Statement:** Teens who follow a strict diet for a while will not usually gain the weight back.

**Answer:** False

After participants respond by raising their hands, explain that more often than not, a person who goes back to eating the way they used to will eventually gain the weight back. The only real way to keep extra weight off is to adopt a healthy weight management program that you can follow for a lifetime.

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**Statement:** Adding calorie-burning activities into your day is a helpful way to lose weight.

**Answer:** True

After participants respond by raising their hands, explain that this statement is true. Explain that there are healthier ways to lose/manage weight, such as adding calorie-burning activities into your day.

#### **SLIDE 6\_WHY DO TEENS DIET?**

Before clicking onto the next slide, read this question aloud and ask the group to offer their opinions on why they think teens diet. Write the answers on the chalk board or poster board.

#### **SLIDE 7\_RESPONSES FROM TEENS**

Tell the group that the following comments are from teens, and then ask if they can relate to these comments.

#### **SLIDE 8\_DIETING DANGER SIGNS**

Ask the group if they can think of any signs that would signal that a friend's dieting may be dangerous. (You can write the responses on the board.)

Advance the presentation, showing one response at a time, and ask the group if they agree with these danger signs.

Write any additional answers that the group comes up with on the chalk board or poster board.

#### **SLIDE 9\_TEENS AT RISK**

**Explain to the group that the diets that teens follow may be very low in calcium, iron, and folic acid. Ask the group if they know what food sources provide their bodies with these nutrients.**

Calcium comes from dairy products, fortified juices, and cereals. Iron is found in green leafy vegetables and meat. Folic acid is found in green leafy vegetables, and enriched grain products such as breads and cereals.

**Explain that current research shows that many adolescents are not getting enough calcium during their teen years. This is worrisome, because adolescence is when you bank (or store) the calcium that your body will need as you get older.**

**Explain that lack of nutrients can have dangerous effects on the development of bones and joints (ex. calcium and osteoporosis).**

#### **SLIDE 10\_TRUE OR FALSE**

Read (or ask someone in the group) to read each statement aloud. After each statement is read, ask the group if they think the answer is true or false, and why.

**Statement: When females diet, their periods may stop and they may lose bone mass.**

**Answer:** True

After participants respond by raising

their hands, **ask the group why they think this statement is true.**

When a female burns more energy or calories than she is taking in, the result is weight loss. Losing too much weight may lower her estrogen (*female hormone*) levels. This can cause her periods to stop and may cause loss of bone mass. This is more common in female athletes.

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**Statement: You should avoid carbs.**

**Answer:** False

After participants respond by raising their hands, **ask the group why this statement is false.**

Then, **ask the group what they think about low carb (short for carbohydrate) diets.**

**Explain that carbs are not bad foods and you don't have to stop eating them all together to lose weight. In fact, you can enjoy high fiber carbs such as whole wheat bread whole grain cereals, rather than less healthy options such as white bread, sugary cereals, and donuts.**

High fiber carbs and whole grains give you energy that lasts longer than sugar or refined grains. Fiber takes longer to digest, so you feel full longer. The trick is to balance the recommended daily servings of carbohydrates with other foods so you are not eating just carbs, but also protein, and healthy fat, too.



## **SLIDE 11\_HELPING TEENS LEARN HOW TO SPOT A FAD DIET**

Ask the group if they think it is easy to get fooled by fad diet claims. For those who answered “yes”, acknowledge that it can be hard to tell if diet claims are true. This is because advertising usually exaggerates the claims, making the diets or quick weight loss plans sound very appealing.

For those participants who answered “no”, ask them what it is about these ads that makes them realize that the claims are false.

## **SLIDE 12\_ASK YOURSELF: DOES THE DIET...**

Show one bullet at a time and stress that if an ad makes any of these claims, it most likely is a fad diet.

## **SLIDE 13\_TEACH YOUR PEERS TO “DITCH DIETS” THAT TELL THEM TO...**

Ask for a volunteer to read the slide aloud. Then ask the group if anyone has any other reasons to add to the list.

## **SLIDE 14\_HOW CAN YOU PROMOTE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMONG YOUR PEERS?**

Read the slide out loud, and then click on the next slide.

## **SLIDE 15\_YOU CAN HELP OTHER**

### **TEENS BY...**

Read the header out loud and click on one bullet at a time.

- **Helping to clarify myths**

Tell the group that when they are looking at magazines with friends, they can tell them what they've learned about how the advertising industry tricks people into thinking that strict diets are good when they are often unhealthy.

- **Teaching them to read labels**

Explain that learning to read food labels will help them make healthy choices. Then tell them to remember to pay attention to the serving size on the label so that they know how many nutrients are in each portion.

- **Encouraging them to be active**

Remind the group that exercise is an important part of healthy weight management. In fact, 60 minutes of daily exercise is recommended. Review simple ways to be more active, such as taking the stairs instead of an elevator, walking instead of taking the bus, or driving, etc.

- **Helping them set realistic goals**

Explain that diets that claim that you will lose a lot of weight quickly do not work in the long term. Tell them that people usually gain back all of the weight they lose on fad diets. Changing your eating habits by eating nutritious foods instead of foods with very little or no nutritional value (*such as*

sweets) is much better for your body and for long term weight control.

- **Suggesting that they limit TV and computer time.**

The group will guess that being active burns more calories than being a couch potato. People often snack on unhealthy foods when they watch TV, too. **Explain that it's okay to watch a TV show or use the computer for short periods of time, and for homework, but try not to spend hours just sitting around. Instead, go for a walk or a bike ride with a friend, or do some other physical activity that you like.**

- **Being a positive role model**

**Explain to the group that they can be positive role models by practicing what they have learned.** Suggest that they teach other teens how to spot a fad diet, or encourage their family and friends to be physically active.

### **SLIDE 16\_THE REAL DEAL**

Review the bullets and **remind participants that even though magazines pitch attractive ways to lose weight, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.** Healthy weight management takes time, and is something you can stick with forever.

### **SLIDE 17\_HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT INVOLVES...**

Read the header out loud, and ask for a

participant to read each bullet. After the volunteer finishes reading the slide, ask the group if they agree with the statements. Then ask if they have any other suggestions for successful weight loss.

### **SLIDE 18\_WEB RESOURCES\_FINAL SLIDE**

**Explain to the group that the websites listed are good sources for finding information regarding weight management. Tell the group that MyPlate has replaced the food guide pyramid. Encourage the participants to go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) to find out what the plate should look like. Don't forget to remind the group that exercise is part of every food guide recommendation. Thank the group for paying attention and for participating in the discussion. Ask if the group has any questions.**

Pass out: Fad Diets vs. Healthy Weight Management: A Guide for Teens