

What's the Scoop on Fad Diets?

No Shortcuts to Losing Weight

By: Ellen Shanley and Colleen Thompson

Hey teens, read the next paragraph and you'll lose weight—guaranteed. Got your attention, didn't we? Most teens know that reading a paragraph is not going to guarantee weight loss. Nonetheless, people try all sorts of crazy things to lose weight.

It's almost impossible to open a magazine or enter a drugstore without being exposed to the latest and greatest way to lose weight fast. But let's be realistic.

No shortcuts to losing weight:

- If there really was a surefire, easy way to lose weight fast without diet or exercise, don't you think everyone would have done it by now?
- Why are there so many overweight people?
- Losing weight is hard work.
- Harder still is keeping weight off.

How can you tell if a diet is a fad? : Ask yourself the following questions when evaluating the latest craze in weight control.

1. Does it sound too good to be true? It probably is.
2. Does it promote weight loss of more than 1–2 pounds per week? Losing more than 2 pounds per week is usually associated with water and muscle loss, not fat loss.
3. Does the diet promote a "no exercise" mentality? Forget it. Any good weight-control program must include exercise to maintain muscle mass and improve fitness.
4. Do you have to buy special food, pills, powders, or other products? In the long run, it is the people selling the stuff who really benefit.

Smarter options

Losing weight requires a change in attitude as well as a change in eating and exercise habits. Changing attitudes and habits is definitely hard to do. Fad diets are just what they sound like: They're temporary, in and out of fashion, and don't offer a permanent solution. In some cases, fad diets can be truly dangerous to your health.

Excerpted with permission from "Fueling the Teen Machine," by Ellen Shanley and Colleen Thompson (Bull Publishing), the ultimate guide to navigating the world of nutrition and health and figuring out how to keep teen bodies healthy, strong, and happy.