

## **Winning the Game of Losing**

### **10 Signs of a Fad Diet**

Waist management is a hot topic for many Canadians these days as they try to shed unwanted pounds. Too many of the methods used to lose weight result in regaining not only the lost pounds, but some extra as well. Fad diets can bear quite a cost - not only to your wallet but to your health and your self esteem, as well. Before getting on the diet-go-round, use the checklist below to judge the program you're considering.

#### **Begin by answering the following questions:**

1. Does the program recommend that you talk with your doctor first?
2. Has a registered dietitian helped to design the program or is one available to talk with you?
3. Does the program use the Body Mass Index (BMI) to help you set healthy and realistic goal weights?
4. Is the recommended weight loss more than two pounds per week?
5. Is the program based on Canada's Food Guide with a selection of foods from all of the food groups?
6. Does the program provide at least 1200 Calories (5000 kilojoules) per day for women and 1500 Calories (6500 kilojoules) per day for men?
7. Does the program allow for personal eating styles as well as your individual nutritional needs?
8. Does the program encourage regular enjoyable physical activity which is suited to your lifestyle and your physical condition?
9. Does the program depend on special products, special foods, supplements or treatments?
10. Are magical claims or high pressure salesmanship involved in any part of the program?

**Now check your answers with those below:**

1. **Yes** - Talk to your doctor first. By talking to your doctor about your weight loss plans you can discuss any medical conditions or special needs you may have. It's one way to find out if weight loss is risky to your health. Generally, children, teenagers, pregnant and nursing women should not be on weight reduction programs.

2. **Yes** - A registered dietitian/nutritionist should be involved with the program. Registered dietitian/nutritionists are specially trained to bring together the science of nutrition and the pleasures of healthy eating. With their ability to sort nutrition fact from fiction, they can design healthy eating plans which will help you lose weight and stay healthy.

3. **Yes** - Goal weights must be realistic. Being underweight is just as harmful to your health as being overweight. Aim for a weight that's in a healthy range for your height and body build. The Body Mass Index (BMI) \*\*, a ratio of height and weight, will help you find that healthy range. Aim for a BMI of 20 to 27 (the BMI does not apply to those under 20 years, over 65 years or athletes).

4. **No** - Recommended weight loss should be no more than 2 lbs. (1 kg) per week. With quick weight loss or starvation, your body's survival instinct kicks in. The rate at which Calories are used slows down and weight loss can grind to a halt. Then, when you add more food, the pounds return quickly. You may even end up heavier than when you began. Therefore a gradual weight loss of 0.5-2 Lbs (0.25 to 1 kg) per week is safe and sensible.

5. **Yes** - Any weight loss program should be based on a variety of foods from Canada's Food Guide. The best way to get all of the more than 50 nutrients we need is to eat a variety of foods from each of the food groups (milk and milk products, fruits and vegetables, grains, meats and alternates) every day.

6. **Yes** - The diet should provide at least 1200 Calories (5000 kilojoules) per day for women and 1500 Calories (6500 kilojoules) per day for men. If you eat less than this, it will be very difficult to get all the nutrients that your body needs. If for any reason you must go on a diet with fewer Calories than this, do so only under medical supervision.

7. **Yes** - A weight control program should be designed specifically for you. A menu that's perfect for your neighbour or your best friend may not be best for you as it doesn't take into account your likes and dislikes and your lifestyle. After all, if the plan doesn't include any of your favourite foods, you won't follow it for long. Your individual nutritional needs must also be considered. For example, a young woman needs more iron than a man of the same age.

8. **Yes** - The program should encourage regular enjoyable physical activity which is suited to your lifestyle and your physical condition. It's a simple equation. If

you take in more energy (in the form of food) than you can use, you'll gain weight and, if you burn more energy in activity than you take in, you'll lose weight. So, instead of only taking in less, be more active and burn more energy. There are other benefits to being active - regular exercise combined with a slow weight loss helps you lose fat instead of muscle. Since the exercise must suit your needs and physical abilities, check with your doctor about what kind of exercise is alright for you.

**9. No** - You should not have to use special products, special foods, supplements or treatments to lose weight. A permanent change in your eating habits and activity is what's going to keep off lost weight. Strange food combinations such as the grapefruit diet or special products, supplements and treatments like injections won't help you either. If you eat a balanced diet you won't need vitamin and mineral supplements which can add unnecessary expense to your weight loss program.

**10. No** - Magical claims and high pressure salesmanship are not needed if the weight loss program is reliable. If it sounds too good to be true, then it usually is. If you're under strong pressure to buy something, then chances are if you had time to think about, you'd say "no".

**Only consider those programs which score a perfect 10!**

There's no magic way to trim down - no powder, cream or magical potion. Wholesome, tasty food combined with regular activity is a sure fire prescription for achieving a healthy weight and a good feeling. So, if, according to this checklist, your diet program fits the bill, you'll be on your way to winning the game of losing

Source: Dietitians of Canada, [www.dietitians.ca/eatwell](http://www.dietitians.ca/eatwell)