



## “Fad-Free” Weight Loss Advice

Dieting is big business. Americans spent more than \$43 billion on weight loss products in 2004, according to American Dietetic Association. But too many people wind up wasting their hard-earned money on fad diets, unproven products and weight-loss gimmicks that just don't work. Still, the fads keep coming -- and coming back.

“The lure of quick and easy weight loss is hard to resist,” says Dee Sandquist, a registered dietitian and American Dietetic Association spokesperson. “That’s especially true for people who struggle to make changes that will optimize their health. They wind up on fad diets that can be harmful to your health in the long run.”

ADA defines “food fads” as “unreasonable or exaggerated beliefs that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutrient supplements or combinations of certain foods may cure disease, convey special health benefits or offer quick weight loss.”



“The reality is, no ‘super food’ or diet approach can reverse weight gain resulting from overeating and inactivity. And because most fad diets don’t teach new eating habits and many require you to give up your favorite foods, people usually don’t stick with them,” Sandquist says. She offers the following tips to help evaluate a new product, diet or recommendation:

- If it sounds too good to be true, it is -- especially if the diet or product offers a “quick fix.”
- Avoid products offering a guaranteed cure or which promote “limited-time offers.”
- Is the source of the information -- such as a book author -- also trying to sell a product, like supplements?
- Fad diets may require you to avoid foods or entire food groups. “Countless reputable studies over many years have shown balance and variety are needed for good health. Any diet that requires you to give up whole categories of foods and to take supplements to replace their nutrients is, by definition, unbalanced,” Sandquist says.

“Spending even a small amount of time on the Internet or at the library can tell you much about whether a dietary approach or product is based on science and isn’t just a fad,” Sandquist says. “Are the product’s claims backed up by a body of scientific research rather than just one study -- or none at all? Do reputable scientific and professional organizations support the claims?”

“If the answers to these questions is no, then you can do better in developing a healthy weight-loss plan that is right for you,” Sandquist says. “A consultation with a registered dietitian is the perfect place to start. A ‘personalized plan’ will provide a balanced approach for long-term success.”

Courtesy of ARAcontent