

## **FAD DIETS LEAD TO FALSE PROMISES**

Spring is on the horizon and you may be tempted to follow one of those quick-fix diets to help you shed the few extra kilo's you gained over the cold winter months. If you are one of those people trapped in a cycle of repeatedly losing and regaining weight (yo-yo dieting), crash diets are not the answer! This type of dieting may slow down your metabolic rate, result in feelings of failure or poor self esteem and could even lead to eating disorders.

### **Watch out for misleading weight-loss diets**

There are a number of diets that have been circulated under various names such as the "Heart Institute three-day diet", the "Heart Foundation diet", the "Soup Diet", the "Pre-Op diet" and the "Seven-day fat burning diet". Many of these diets falsely say they are endorsed by our organisation. We would like you to be aware that these diets are **not** from the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA and their origin is not known.

### **What's wrong with crash diets such as these?**

These diets often promise quick results with huge weight losses. Although they may appear to work initially, they cannot sustain the weight loss in the long run. They may even result in subsequent weight gain that is greater than the amount originally lost!

- With quick weight loss, it's not usually fat that is lost, but fluid and muscle mass. This means that at the end of the diet, although you may have lost kilograms - you have actually increased your percentage of body fat. Also, when you revert back to your old eating habits, the lost kilos are quickly put back on. To top it all, if you have not exercised, the regained kilos will mostly be body fat (which burns less energy than muscle). The gradual loss of muscle mass contributes to the slowing down of your metabolism.
- They often restrict certain food groups or suggest unusual combinations of foods which encourage poor eating habits or cycles of starvation and bingeing.
- They may overemphasize a particular food type (e.g. The Cabbage Soup Diet) or food group. This violates the first principle of good nutrition: *eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of foods*. Following such a fad diet for more than a few weeks, could lead to nutritional deficiencies, as one type of food cannot provide you with all the nutrients you need for good health. The so-called fat-burning Cabbage Soup Diet includes mostly fruits and vegetables. It supposedly helps heart patients lose 4.5-7.5 kg in seven days before surgery. Remember that there are no super foods, or magic answers to weight loss. The key to successful weight loss and general wellbeing is to eat moderate amounts from all the food groups, not large amounts of a few special foods or a particular food group.
- These diets often lack variety, may become monotonous and boring, which in turn make them almost impossible to stay on for long periods.

### **What does The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA recommend?**

The only sensible way to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight permanently is to eat smaller portions and balance your food intake with physical activity (at least 30-60 minutes on most days of the week). It's best to aim for a well-balanced, low calorie eating plan that includes a variety of nutrient-rich foods such as fresh vegetables and fruit, wholegrains and fat-free or low fat dairy products. Gradual weight loss is the safest and most effective long term way to lose weight. Eating plans that encourage a weight loss of ½-1 kg a week are more likely to be successful and you're more likely to stick to them in the long term.

For heart-healthy recipes, tips and more information on healthy weight loss – contact a registered dietician on the Heart Mark Diet Line on 0860 223 222, email [heart@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:heart@heartfoundation.co.za) or visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za).

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