



Fad Diet Danger

The skinny on 5 trendy diets to avoid

by Terri West, Certified Fitness Trainer

How many times have you tried the hottest new fad diet only to find yourself feeling ill, lethargic or more overweight than you were when you began? The problem with fad diets is that they are short-term solutions that deter long-term goals. Fads get you psyched and motivated to try something new, but they often send you back to the drawing board. If you're really trying to lose weight, avoid these five fads.

PALEO

If you're a meat-loving carnivore, this diet can sound very appealing. Fruits and vegetables are encouraged to complement the "caveman diet," but it excludes grains and dairy, both of which contain nutrients necessary for most body types. You may drop a few pounds, but watch out! The moment you return to complex

carbs, grains and dairy, you can expect your body to expand beyond your jeans. Kidney toxicity is nothing to sneeze at either, and if your meat of choice is beef, beware. Red meat contains more saturated fat and cholesterol than any other meat, and in large amounts it has been known to contribute to both rectal and colon cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure.

LOW-CARB

Your body needs carbohydrates, plain and simple. Whatever you're doing, whether it's working out or performing everyday tasks, carbs are your body's source of energy. Oatmeal and brown rice are great examples of "good carbs" that help fuel your day. Carbohydrates are also needed as a binder. Combined with protein and fat, they build lean muscle.

FASTING

Speaking of low energy, intermittent fasting is the worst and most unhealthy way to lose weight. Your body receives zero nutrients, and your metabolism shuts down. Many people who jump on this bandwagon don't even know whether their body is equipped to withstand long periods without food. Fasters are usually hungry, tired and moody. Also, acid reflux and heartburn often occur in fasting individuals.

MASTER CLEANSE

Lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper—what's wrong with this picture? Everything. Maple syrup is sugar, and sugar stresses the liver. In addition, the cleanse doesn't include any protein, which is needed for sustaining muscle tone. This diet works in terms of caloric restriction, but you don't lose fat, you lose muscle. If you want to become flabby due to muscle wasting, this is the diet for you!

GLUTEN-FREE

Most people don't know what gluten is, yet like the other fads on this list, the hysteria around becoming gluten-free is widespread. The worst part of it is that people are using this diet to lose weight, which isn't its purpose—a prime example of the danger and irresponsibility of self-diagnosis. The purpose of removing gluten from one's diet is to prevent celiac disease, which occurs in people allergic to wheat. But only about 0.5% of adults suffer from this allergen. By denying yourself gluten without a doctor's advice, it's possible that you could be missing something in your diet that you need.

So what's left? Deprivation is not the answer, as it'll only leave you frustrated. If you crave a food, go ahead and have it once or twice a week; just do so in moderation. I recommend good, old-fashioned, balanced meals to boost your metabolism throughout the day. Four to five mini-meals comprised of protein, healthy fats and good carbohydrates is guaranteed to satiate and sustain you. And always consult your physician before beginning a new program. **F**



What should I eat for breakfast to ensure proper nutrition for muscle growth? —Jan, Hollywood

You want to digest 30-45 grams of protein within 30-45 minutes of waking up every morning. I suggest either a protein shake or eggs. You will also want to consume a carbohydrate. I love goji berries mixed in with half a cup of good, old-fashioned instant oatmeal. This will revitalize and refuel your body after a night spent fasting. Replenishing your body with a protein source and a carbohydrate will kick your metabolism in gear and fuel your muscles.

What supplements should I be taking?

—Michael, Palm Springs

This can be confusing, considering health stores seem to have thousands of products for a better-looking body. These are my favorites: (1) BCAA (Branch chain amino acids), or what I like to call "muscle food." BCAA is vital for healthy muscle growth. (2) Glutamine is a post-workout supplement that aids the recovery process of muscle fibers. When we workout, we tear muscle fibers down. It's only during our resting period that we're actually building muscle, and glutamine expedites the recovery process. (3) Lastly, a multi-vitamin. We can't get all our daily nutrients from food, and a multi-vitamin will ensure you get the proper nutrients your body needs to stay active and healthy.

