

Fad Diet Reality Check!

Barbara L. Ames

Wildcat District Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Quick-weight-loss or “fad” diets can seem appealing. But in reality, there is no magic formula for losing weight.

There are no quick fixes, no foods, wraps, or pills to melt the pounds away. Chances are you didn't gain those pounds overnight and aren't going to lose them overnight either, not and do it safely.

In order to maintain a healthy weight, a lifestyle change needs to occur that includes a balanced diet and physical activity. Some weight-loss diets may work in the beginning.

This is often because the fad diet helps you cut calories in one way or another. However, they are hard to sustain over time and can even lead to greater risk of health issues.

A better plan is to adopt the idea that what you eat significantly affects your health. Each food group provides its own unique set of vitamins, minerals, and energy for the body. Try to wean yourself from sweetened beverages, packaged foods, and sugars. Then try to implement changes that are compatible with your lifestyle, work schedule, and individual tastes. It can help to focus on reducing or eliminating highly processed foods in your eating plan.

The potential problems with fad diets include:

- **Poor long-term weight control.** A fad diet promotes a “quick fix” and does not teach healthy eating plans.
- **Increased risk of chronic diseases.** Many fad diets severely restrict or eliminate fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and whole grains. These foods all contain nutrients that may help prevent many chronic conditions.
- **Reduced athletic performance.** Diets that significantly restrict carbohydrates increase symptoms of fatigue and decrease body energy supplies and endurance. In addition, low-carbohydrate diets cause a loss of fluid and electrolytes.
- **Kidney stones and gout.** Diets that are high in protein and low in carbohydrates often lead to the formation of uric acid and calcium oxalate.
- **Ketosis.** A diet that is low in carbohydrates puts your body into ketosis. Without adequate carbohydrates for an energy supply, fat becomes the primary energy source, and ketones turn out to be the means of transportation. You may notice a funny smell to your breath.



Just because a diet is popular doesn't mean that it is effective or good for you. If you are considering going on a diet, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does the diet promise rapid weight loss (e.g. Lose 10 pounds in one week)?
2. Does the diet require rigid menus of a limited number of foods to be eaten at a specific time of day?
3. Does the diet use pictures and testimonials rather than scientific evidence?
4. Does the diet claim that you can lose weight without exercise?
5. Does an element of the diet have warnings against it? (e.g. FDA has warnings against an ingredient in a fad diet supplement)
6. Does the diet eliminate one or more of the five food groups?
7. Does the diet require you to skip meals?
8. Does the diet encourage the purchase of special products – food, pills, herbs, seminars?
9. Does the diet claim to be suitable for everyone or not warn people with diabetes or high blood pressure to seek medical advice before starting the diet?
10. Does the diet cost a lot of money?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you are looking at a fad diet. Steer clear of it!

Instead of a fad diet, follow these simple guidelines to make good food choices for life by following the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as encouraged at <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>. A healthy eating pattern accounts for all foods and beverages within an appropriate calorie level and includes:

- **A variety of vegetables from all the subgroups**—dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy, and other vegetables;
- **Fruits**, especially whole fruits;
- **Grains**, at least half of which are whole grains;
- **Fat-free or low-fat dairy**, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages;
- **A variety of protein foods**, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products;
- **Oils**;
- **A healthy eating pattern limits** saturated fats and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.

For more specific information about “fad” diets, check out the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics site at <http://www.eatright.org/resources/health/weight-loss/fad-diets>.

For more information about this topic or other topics, contact the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Wilson County, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at [facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district](https://www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district).

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